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Contentious politics and the making of Egyptian public spaces

El-Kouedi, Mona

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***CONTENTIOUS POLITICS AND
THE MAKING OF EGYPTIAN
PUBLIC SPACES***

MONA EL-KOUEDI

SUPERVISOR: PROF. VIVIENNE JABRI

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD)

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON (KCL)
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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Abstract

My research project is on the political contestations over the making of Egyptian public spaces. It aims at understanding the process through which political actors define and re-define public spaces, particularly in contentious moments, and how public spaces constitute political identities and influence their political choices. Through making use of the Egyptian case study, I identified three different patterns of constituting public spaces: monopolisation, marketisation and securitisation. In my research, I will illustrate these three patterns while highlighting their spatial manifestations in particular episodes of contention. I will investigate the process through which the Egyptian ruling regime and other oppositional groups constitute, contest, define and re-define public spaces during episodes of contention in order to legitimise their political claims.

The research answers the questions: How are public spaces constituted, defined and re-defined in contentious events? How and when do they become contested sites between the ruling regime (*al nizam*) and various opposition groups? How could these different opposition groups manage to mobilise public spaces, altering them from spaces of everyday life, into sites of political activism? How are public spaces implicated in constituting political subjectivities? How do discourses in the public sphere impact on the constitution of public spaces as contested locations?

In my thesis, I aim at developing a new approach to understand the notion of the public space. Instead of searching for a new overarching definition of the public space, I stress that it is more important to investigate the process through which public spaces are constituted, negotiated and contested. In doing so, my research challenges dominant definitions that take the notion of the public space for granted and defines it as the space that is open and accessible to everyone. I argue that political actors engage in a process of defining and re-defining public spaces. I also argue that public spaces could be implicated in defining and re-defining these political actors.

To my Parents who taught me everything,
Akil El-Kouedi and May Hassan Eissa

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Note on Arabic Transliteration and Translations

Arabic words that appear in the thesis will be transliterated according to the simplified version of the system used in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* in which the letter ‘*ayn* is represented by (‘) and *hamza* by (’). For example, *fada’* ‘*am*. The names of Egyptian presidents will be spelled as they appear in English language secondary literature, so President Nasir will be spelled as Nasser. The same principle applies to the names of cities and squares, like Tahrir Square and Helwan.

Seeing that the thesis is largely Egypt focused, transliteration will reflect the Egyptian colloquial. So *al-Jama’a al-Islamiyyah* will be transliterated as *al-Gama’a al-Islamiyyah*. The exception for this is the word *al-Majal al-’am* and *al-Jihad*.

Finally, all translations from Arabic to English are mine, unless stated otherwise.

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Introduction

On 25 January 2011, Egyptians took to the streets of Cairo and other major cities, demanding President Mubarak to step down. After 18 days of persistent protests and occupation of *Tahrir* Square in downtown Cairo, President Mubarak, one of the most resilient dictators, resigned after having spent 30 years in power. The world had watched in amazement and bewilderment how oppressed Egyptians, coming from different social classes and representing various political orientations, had transformed *Tahrir* Square from being an icon of traffic jams, chaos, crowded buses, and state bureaucracy, into a space that resisted the ruling regime and toppled its president. This process had not been confined to *Tahrir* Square; it took place in many other streets and squares of Egyptian major cities, like *al-Qa'ed Ibrahim* Square in Alexandria, *al-'arba'een* Square in Suez, *Toreal* Square in Mansoura, and *al-Shuun* Square in al-Mahalla al-Kubra.

The magnificent images of hundreds of thousands of Egyptians marching the streets and squares of Egypt's major urban cities calling for an end to police brutality, economic corruption and political stagnation, confirming their rights to 'bread, freedom and social justice' and peacefully chanting 'the people want the regime down', had pushed commentators to applaud the rise of new 'public space' in Egypt. Egypt's *Tahrir* Square particularly was celebrated as an ideal model for a public space that is open, autonomous and accessible to everyone, and which reflects democratic ideals¹. Furthermore, the extensively heated discussions and debates on the future of Mubarak's regime in privately owned channels and virtual spaces of blogs, twitter and Facebook over the past decade prior to the revolution had encouraged scholars to celebrate the emergence of a new Egyptian 'public sphere'.

Nevertheless, these aspirations in a new Egypt with its democratic public space and public sphere² (that is all inclusive and homogenous) had started to fade away as the Arab Spring turned into an Arab winter. With the military clinging to power, the

¹ On Al-Jazeera International live coverage of the Egyptian Revolution, reporters were describing *Tahrir* Square as a genuine public space.

² Chapter one will include a discussion of the concepts of public space and public sphere.

continuation of the emergency law, and the Islamists' success in fair elections, fears from the Islamisation and the militarisation of Egyptian public spaces started to dominate debates and discussions on the future of Egypt. Moreover, the eruption of bloody clashes in Mohamed Mahmoud Street and in front of *Maspero*³ (both of which are metres away from *Tahrir* Square) had created a sense of nostalgia for the public space that was once installed in *Tahrir* Square for 18 days during the revolution, something that represents an exception, rather than the norm. What seems to fade away, however, is the sparkle of an 'ideal' public space that is open, accessible, and autonomous and which represents space for dissent against the ruling authorities. New public spaces that were different from the one in *Tahrir* started to rise, those which supported the ancient regime (in *Moustafa Mahmoud* Square in Giza and *Roxy* Square in Heliopolis), or military rule (in *Abbasiyya* in front of the Ministry of Defence), or the church (in front of the state television building of *Maspero* in downtown Cairo). But are these new spaces 'truly genuine' public spaces, regardless of the fact that they do not represent dissent against the ruling authority, but rather support it? Is there something called a 'true' public space? How are public spaces constituted in the first place? What are the processes that lead to the construction of a public space in *Tahrir* Square that is completely different from that constructed in *Moustafa Mahmoud* Square for instance? Why do some spaces turn into sites for political contentions, while others do not? What are the discourses and the practices that intervene in such processes? What are the contentions that contribute to the making of public spaces?

My research project is on the political contestations over the making of Egyptian public spaces. It aims at understanding the process through which political actors define and re-define public spaces, particularly in contentious moments, and how public spaces constitute political identities and influence their political choices. Through making use of the Egyptian case study, I will show the different patterns of constituting public spaces and their spatial manifestations in particular episodes of contention. I will investigate the process through which the Egyptian ruling regime and other oppositional groups constitute, contest, define and re-define public spaces during episodes of contention in order to legitimise their political claims. I will show how this process alters spaces of everyday life into sites for political contentions. I

³ The two events took place in 2011, only months after the resignation of Mubarak.

will also highlight what I will refer to as ‘spatial repertoires’, where locations such as the street, the factory, and the university come to acquire spatial agency, constituting political identities and having a central place in political contentions.

The research answers the questions: How are public spaces constituted, defined and re-defined in contentious events? How and when do they become contested sites between the ruling regime (*al nizam*) and various opposition groups? How could these different opposition groups manage to mobilise public spaces, altering them from spaces of everyday life, into sites of political activism? How are public spaces implicated in constituting political subjectivities? How do discourses in the public sphere impact on the constitution of public spaces as contested locations?

My research uses a number of research methods, articulated in response to multiple methodological problems that developed while conducting my research. The major problem, however, was the ambiguity of the central concept of the thesis, the notion of the public space. The reasons behind such ambiguity are several: the abstract nature of the term, the historical jargon that comes with it and dictates it, the ideological biases that develop whenever the term is used, and the large number of disciplines claiming authorship rights over the concept, producing an overwhelming public space literature. I confronted the choice of whether to search for an alternative definition, or to develop an alternative approach to understanding the public space, without seeking a comprehensive overarching definition. I have chosen the second option, investigating the process through which public spaces are formulated, rather than seeking a consensual definition of the ‘public space’ as such. I argue that most of the literature on the public space suffers from a number of problems that hinder any critical discussions of the notion of the public space, which will be discussed in detail in chapter one. These problems can be summarised as: 1) the literature’s preoccupation with the ‘a priori’ qualities of the public space, while ignoring the process through which public space(s) are constituted, 2) the idealisation of the public space, stressing its superiority over all other spaces, 3) undermining the important link between the discursive public sphere and the physical public space, 4) Western centrism, with most of the literature focusing on Western experiences and case studies, 5) undermining the role of political contentions in defining the public space

itself, and not merely in identifying who is granted presence in these ‘taken for granted’ public spaces.

My thesis challenges the literature on these issues, offering a critical approach to the notion of the public space. I argue that most of the literature on public space has reproduced the assumptions that frame the literature on the public sphere, leading to more or less similar problems. In my research, alternatively, I argue that public spaces have no a priori qualities, and should not be taken for granted, pre-defined, or idealised. In that sense, the concept of the public space that I advocate is not imprisoned within the ‘Western’ world nor is it confined to the ‘Liberal experience’. It is neither a pre-condition for democracy nor one of its achievements. Through making use of the Egyptian case study, I contest the mainstream romanticist notion of the public space being defined as open, democratic, autonomous and accessible to everyone. The selection of the Egyptian case study reflects both my interest in the notion of the public space and my exposure to the on-going Egyptian political contentions that are spatially manifested. Egypt is characterised by its long history of political contentions in which ‘space’ plays a significant role, whether it is the street, the square, the university or the factory. The political use of various spaces, most notably the street, is a dominant characteristic of the Egyptian political landscape either historical or contemporary. The Egyptian case study reflects the significance of political contentions in the making of public spaces, which has been highly ignored in the literature of the public space.

My research brings together theories of the public space, the public sphere and contentious politics within a Middle Eastern context. It offers a critical understanding of the notion of the public space by investigating the process through which public spaces are constituted by political actors in contentious episodes, and the role of the political discourses of the public sphere in this process, as well as the role of space in constituting identities and influencing contentions. I present an alternative approach to understanding the public space, which acknowledges the constructive and constitutive nature of public space(s). In doing so, I introduce theories of contentious politics⁴,

⁴ Tilly and Tarrow (2007) define contentious politics as ‘the interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties’ (p.4). The

showing that they could provide an important tool for understanding the notion of the public space. There have been key attempts in contentious politics studies to investigate the spatial dimension of contention, as will be discussed later, yet these attempts aimed at using spatial theories for a better understanding of contentious politics. My thesis, alternatively, uses contentious politics theories to understand public spaces and their formulation. Following Tilly's (2000) footsteps, my research 'concentrates on well-documented events in historical locales precisely because effective analysis of spatial processes requires knowledge of culture's implantation in particular places and times' (p. 137).

Accordingly, I decided to focus on three episodes of contention that developed in different historical junctures of Egypt's post-colonial history, where the contestation over the making of public spaces is most evident. These episodes of contention are: the 1968 students' and workers' protests against the Nasser regime, the 1977 food riots against the Sadat regime, and finally the 2011 revolution against the Mubarak regime. In these three episodes of contention, political actors were involved in a process of defining and re-defining public spaces to legitimise their political claims. These contentious events represent different junctures in Egypt's contemporary history, taking place under different ruling regimes. They represent moments in which forces of resistance disrupted and challenged the ruling regime's attempts to monopolise (in the case of Nasser), marketise (in the case of Sadat), and securitise (in the case of Mubarak) the process of constituting Egyptian public spaces. The contentions that erupted in 1968 came in response to the pattern of constituting public spaces developed by the Nasser regime, which I will refer to as the 'Monopolisation Pattern', in which the ruling regime sought to monopolise the process of constituting public spaces. The food riots of 1977 were directly related to a rather different pattern of constituting public spaces that was established under the Sadat regime and which I will refer to as the 'Marketisation Pattern' in which the ruling regime opened the process of constituting public spaces to non-state actors, while excluding actors who challenged the regime's discourse. Finally, the Egyptian Revolution in 2011 also came in response to a third pattern of constituting public spaces developed under Mubarak and which I call the 'Securitisation Pattern', where the ruling regime used

dynamism between contentious politics and space will be discussed in details in chapter two of the thesis.

the security apparatus to control the making of public spaces, reducing them into spaces for mere survival. Through investigating the process of constituting public spaces in different historical moments, it becomes clear how public spaces are moving, vibrant and dynamic. It reveals how the process of defining and re-defining public spaces is continuous and never fixed. It shows the dynamism between the process of constituting public spaces and contentious politics. I will demonstrate a detailed illustration of the selection of the Egyptian case study and the episodes of contentions in the methodology section in chapter two.

I started my research in September 2008, when spatial political contentions were on the rise in Egypt, especially after the formation of the Egyptian movement for change, known as *Kefaya*, literally meaning ‘enough’ in 2003, which mobilised street protests against the Mubarak regime. In April 2008, political contentions erupted when workers of Egypt’s largest textile company, *Misr* Spinning and Weaving Company, in *al-Mahalla al-Kubra*, located at the Nile Delta, called for a strike in response to rising food prices and low wages. The workers’ call for a strike dominated the Egyptian public sphere, splitting Egyptian public opinion into those who sympathised with the strike and those who did not. Political activists used Internet platforms to spread the workers’ call for a strike. They formed a Facebook group ‘6 April’, which called for a nation-wide strike and street demonstrations in sympathy with the workers’ demands and pressed for democratic and economic reforms. Egyptian security forces responded by occupying the factory and aborting street demonstrations. They also arrested political activists responsible for online groups that called for a nationwide strike. The increasing pace of political contentions in Egypt and its spatial manifestations raises questions on the meaning of public spaces, their formation and more importantly their significance to political contentions. These questions have pushed me to investigate the notion of the public space in relation to political contentions.

My first fieldwork trip to Egypt was in March 2010 when I stayed there until August 2010. In this period, I combined multiple research methods and made use of both primary and secondary sources. I interviewed political activists, politicians (including Mubarak’s party ideologues), academics, intellectuals, workers, lawyers, taxi drivers, women and young people. I met these groups in various ‘spaces’ at universities, cafes, offices, factories, and in streets and taxis. The aim of these interviews was not to

reach an overarching ‘indigenous’ definition of the public space. The aim was rather to gain a better understanding of political contentions in Egypt and their spatial manifestations. These interviews, along with my observations on the political contentions that were taking place in streets, factories and universities in Egypt, enriched my understanding of the dynamism between political contentions and public spaces. The responses I received from the participants reflected the significance of political contentions to the understanding of public spaces. It was interesting to observe that whenever the various participants described the spaces of the street, the factory or the university, being political spaces they usually referred to a particular episode of contention. When they described the factory of *al-Mahalla* they did so with regard to the contentious events of 6 April 2008, or when they explained the importance of *Tahrir* Square, they were also referring to the *Kefaya* movement and its continuous demonstrations in the square. Throughout the interviews, there were also references to political contentions that took place in particular historical junctures in Egypt’s post-colonial history, and their spatial significance, like the students’ protests in the 1960s and the food riots in the 1970s, which I decided to investigate further in my research.

My first fieldwork trip to Egypt helped me locate my research within the context of the literature of public space and contentious politics. After returning from my fieldwork, I revisited my conceptual framework, critically engaging with the literature on the public space and contentious politics. I returned to Egypt in December 2010 and stayed there until 14th January 2011. During this month and a half I was collecting data on the Egyptian case study. I witnessed the declaration of the results of Egypt’s most controversial parliamentary elections in December 2010, in which the National Democratic Party (NDP), Mubarak’s party at the time, won more than 80 per cent of the parliamentary seats, which left political forces frustrated from the corrupted political system and political institutions, and which pushed them to join street protests.

Only 10 days after my leaving Egypt, the Egyptian revolution erupted on 25 January 2011, where *Tahrir* Square played a central role in the contentions that were taking place between the anti-regime protestors and Mubarak’s security forces. The Egyptian Revolution represented both an opportunity and a challenge to my research. It

represented a substantial contentious moment that could be compared with the remarkable contentious moments of 1968 and 1977 in terms of the scale of protests, their duration, the mobilisation level and the involvement of different political actors, and the response of the ruling regime. *Tahrir* Square perfectly reflected the interactions between political contentions and public spaces, giving a vivid picture of the dynamism of public spaces. Unlike the 1968 and the 1977 episodes of contention, I was part of the 2011 revolution and witnessed it myself. Although I was not able to be physically present in Egypt during the 18 days of occupying *Tahrir* Square by anti-Mubarak protesters, I had the chance to follow the events live. The Al-Jazeera channel managed, with the help of protestors, to place some cameras in *Tahrir* Square, showing the world live images from *Tahrir*, which became widely known as the Al-Jazeera moment. Moreover, the Al-Jazeera crew conducted live interviews with the protestors in *Tahrir* Square, something that I followed daily for not less than 17 hours a day. During the 18 days of protests, I was in touch with protestors in *Tahrir* Square when they managed to have access to mobile phones, something which provided me with a first hand account of the events.

I travelled to Egypt several times following the revolution on short fieldwork trips, in March, May, September, and December 2011. On each of these short trips, I stayed in Egypt for almost a month, where I met with people who participated in the 18 days of protests in *Tahrir* Square. The protestors I met were very diverse including journalists, filmmakers, photographers, political activists, students, and intellectuals. I also met with members of the dissolved ruling party of the NDP, along with retired officers of the military and of the Egyptian State Security Investigations Service (Amn al-Dawla).

The Egyptian Revolution, however, has also represented a challenge to my research. On the one hand, the incorporation of new data that became available with the revolution in a limited time was not an easy task, especially with the on-going changes in the Egyptian political system. Accordingly, I decided to focus on the 18 days of protests that took place in *Tahrir* Square, which started on 25 January and lasted until the resignation of Mubarak on 11 February 2011. I may refer to political contentions that took place after Mubarak's resignation only if they were related to *Tahrir* Square. Moreover, many scholars portray the Egyptian Revolution as an

unprecedented moment in the history of Egypt, as it led to the emergence of a 'genuine' public space that toppled the Egyptian president. The making of *Tahrir* Square into a pro-democracy public space has given rise to the voices that reiterate the mainstream definition of the public space being an autonomous space that is democratic, accessible and open to everyone, stressing the symbiotic relationship between public space and democracy, which I criticise in my research. Nevertheless, such voices completely ignore the historical dimension of Egyptian political contentions that have always had a spatial dimension, something that my research stresses through focusing on historical contentious moments that were spatially significant. Moreover, the political contentions that continued after the 18 days shows how Tahrir Square itself has been defined and re-defined, even by non-democratic forces, something that undermines the argument that Tahrir Square is a public space that is open, democratic, autonomous and accessible to everyone.

Through studying these three episodes of contentions that I have chosen thoroughly, I identified three patterns of constituting public spaces: 1) the monopolisation pattern, 2) the marketisation pattern, and 3) the securitisation pattern. These patterns reflect the dynamism between political contentions and the making of public spaces, which my research investigates. They represent useful tools to illustrate the role of political contentions in the making of public spaces, as well as the process through which public spaces constitute political subjectivities and shape contentions. Given the complex relations that arise as a result of the dynamism between political contentions and public spaces, these patterns keep the analysis of the different episodes of contentions focused.

My research will be divided into three parts. In the first part, which will be developed in chapter one, I will be addressing the public space literature and the issues that my research challenges and why. I argue that the literature on the public space reproduces the assumptions of the notion of the public sphere, particularly the binary opposition of the public/ private and the idealisations of the public sphere. The aim is to offer a critical understanding of the notion of the public space through challenging the public/ private dichotomy that has dominated the bulk of public space literature, and also through challenging the idealisation of the public space being an open, accessible and autonomous space.

In the second part, I will highlight the importance of the theories of contentious politics in understanding the ‘making of public spaces’ in which I will discuss the spatial dimension in theories of contentious politics and in Middle Eastern studies. I will show how my thesis develops this literature further, in order to offer an understanding of the notion of the public space and the process through which it is constituted and constitutes political actors. Moreover, I will discuss the research methodology and the selection of the Egyptian case study. This second stage will be tackled in chapter two of my research.

Finally, the third part includes the empirical chapters of my research. Through focusing on the Egyptian case study, I will show how public spaces are being constituted during moments of contention, and how they could be implicated in constituting political actors and shaping contention. This third stage will be developed in chapters three, four and five of my research. In these chapters, I will illustrate the three patterns of constituting Egyptian public spaces, which provide a useful tool in analysing the dynamism between political contentions and public spaces. In chapter three, I will discuss the monopolisation pattern, which developed under the Nasser regime, in order to show how public spaces were constituted under the Nasser regime and their role in constituting political subjectivities. In chapter Four, I will discuss the marketisation pattern under the Sadat regime, which shows how a change in the dynamics of political contentions has a significant impact on the process of constituting public spaces. Finally, in chapter five, I will illustrate the securitisation pattern of constituting public spaces under the Mubarak regime, which emphasises the changing nature of public spaces that is never fixed and could not be pre-defined.

The three empirical chapters follow the same structure to enable comparisons and to provide deeper analysis of the dynamism between political contentions and public spaces. I divide the three chapters into three main sections. In the first section of each chapter, I will discuss political contentions and the rise of the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces. In the second section of the three empirical chapters, I will discuss the effects and manifestations of the dominant pattern on the making of Egyptian public spaces. The final section of the three chapters will be dedicated to discussing the resistance that arises from within the dominant pattern of constituting

public spaces. I will particularly analyse the three episodes of contention that I have selected within the Egyptian case study. In chapter one, I will discuss the students' and workers' protests of 1968 against the Nasser regime and the monopolisation pattern. In chapter four, I will analyse the food riots of 1977 against the Sadat regime and the marketisation pattern. Finally, in chapter five, I will focus on the 2011 Egyptian Revolution against the Mubarak regime and the securitisation pattern.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, I will stress the main arguments of my thesis. I will show how my research answered the research's central question of how public spaces are constituted and how they are implicated in constituting political subjectivities. I will also discuss the limitations of my research and future areas of research.

Chapter 1:

The Public Space and its Problems

In this chapter, I will review the literature of the public space, identifying its main problems which hinder the critical understanding of the notion of the public space. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, I will investigate the etymology of the notion of the public space both in Latin and in Arabic, showing the variations in the etymological origins of the terms and hence the failure to reach a consensual universal definition of the public space. In the second section of the chapter, I will discuss the importance of investigating the link between the notion of the public sphere and that of the public space. The aim of this section is twofold: first, to emphasise that investigating the political discourses of the public sphere is key to understanding the process of constituting public space and second, to show that the assumptions of public sphere theory have greatly influenced and shaped our understanding of the notion of the public space, where the basic tenets of both notions appear to be the same. In sections three and four of this chapter, I will show how the literature of the public space has reproduced the assumptions that underpin uses of the notion of the public sphere, particularly the binary opposition of the public/ private and the idealisation of the public sphere being an open, accessible and autonomous space. The reproduction of the assumptions of the public sphere into the public space literature represented the main obstacle towards developing a critical understanding of the public space.

Understanding Public Space(s)

Etymologically, the term public is derived from the Latin word *publicus* as a form of *populus*, meaning the people. The term is used both as a noun and as an adjective. When the term public is used as a noun it particularly refers to people within society, in other words, it refers to “the community of people as an organised body; the nation; ...” (Oxford Dictionary 1989: 781). Yet public is not to be equated with masses, where in the latter there is no specific purpose for the people to gather. The ‘public’, on the other hand are usually bound together by specific purpose, identity, or interest.

On the other hand, when used as an adjective public means ‘general... opposed to the private’, and hence it refers to something ‘pertaining to the people as a whole... affects, or concerns the community or nation’ (Oxford Dictionary 1989: 778). Clive Barnett (2008) argues that the term public refers to ‘the subject... or the object of concerted action’ (p.3). For instance public activities are those that are either conducted by or affecting the ‘public’. In other words, the ‘public’ is used to refer to something being open and available to the people, something that is meant to be seen and heard by the people as a whole (made available to all of them). Accordingly, the ‘public space’ could be defined either as the space that belongs to this entity that is referred to as ‘the public’ (the space that is owned by the people), or as the space that is characterised of being open, and accessible to everyone. In these definitions, the notion of ‘space’ is not being problematised; it is kept as constant.

In Arabic, there are multiple words referring to the term public. When the term public is used in its capacity as a noun it can be literally translated as *Jumhur*⁵ (from the verb *Jamhar*- meaning to gather in a group or mass, specifically of people) (Ibn Manzour, Lisan al-‘Arab 1300 AH: 220). Linguistically, the term *Jumhur* (public) is differentiated from *al-‘ammah*⁶ or *al-‘awam* (literally translated as the masses- meaning ‘the common people’) derived from the verb ‘*amma* (pervade), where the *Jumhur* refers to a group of people that is identifiable and visible (Ibid: 219)⁷. On the other hand, the Arabic terms used as adjectives to describe something as being public, or available to the people at large, are several and include: *Jahri* (manifest), ‘*alani* (overt) and ‘*am* (general). The last of these words, ‘*am*, is the most popular in contemporary usage; for instance, notions of public interest, public ownership and public sector are translated as *maslaha ‘ammah*, *melkeyyah ‘ammah* and *qeta’ ‘am* respectively.

⁵ In colloquial Egyptian the ‘J’ is pronounced as ‘g’, and hence the word is known in Egypt as *Gumhur*

⁶ This is a linguistic difference, while in practice the term *Jamahir* is used to refer to the masses, particularly in Libya and the Levant.

⁷ A more controversial, yet highly important, term in Arabic that also refers to the public is the notion of the *Ummah* (usually translated as nation/community). In Egyptian history, the term *Ummah* was used to mean the public. During the 1919 revolution in Egypt, Saad Zaghloul’s house was titled *Beit al-Ummah* (or the people’s home); it was considered a public space that belonged to the people as a whole.

If the space is understood as belonging to the public (where public is used as a noun), then the public space should be translated as *fada' jamahiri*. On the other hand, if the term public is used as an adjective, where the space is characterised by its availability to everyone, then public space should be translated as *fada' 'am*, which means a space that is not associated with an identified group of the public (literally meaning general space)⁸, and which is particularly distinct from the private *al-khas*. In contemporary Arab societies, the terms *fad'a 'am* and *majal 'am* are popular translations for the notion of the public space, which indicate perceiving the public space as being a general space which belongs to no one and that is being opposed to the private sphere *majal khas*⁹. This perception of the public space corresponds with some Egyptian intellectuals' understanding of the notion of the public space. Mohammed Soffar, an Egyptian political theorist who teaches at Cairo University, argues that in Egypt and in the Arab world in general, we do not have public spaces which can be characterised as being shared/owned by the people (public) as 'in Egypt we moved from an understanding of a space that belongs to everyone, to a space that belongs to no body, what we have now is 'no man's land' (M. Soffar 2009, Pers. Comm. 27 July). Soffar, who gave this quote prior to the Egyptian Revolution in 2011, was referring to the lack of belongingness towards Egyptian public spaces. During the occupation of *Tahrir* Square for 18 days, protesters confirmed Soffar's argument on the lack of belongingness. As an Egyptian protestor from *Tahrir* Square put it: 'this is the first time I feel that this is my country, ... the first time I feel that this square belongs to me... I want everyone to join us (in *Tahrir* Square)'.¹⁰

The public space in Latin refers to spaces that belong to the people and are characterised by being open to everyone. The Arabic etymology of the public space defines the terms as a general space that belongs to no one and is characterised by

⁸ There is also a differentiation between the term 'space' and 'sphere' in Arabic translation. The term sphere is literally translated as *majal* (from the verb *jala* which means moved around). The term space is literally translated as *fada'* (which signifies emptiness). Space is also translated as *makan* (which literally means place- the pair of time and space is usually translated as *zaman wa makan* and not *zaman wa fada'*).

⁹ Most of the recent writings in Arabic on the notion of the public space focus on the discursive version of the public space, particularly the one developed by Habermas. In recent years, this became very prominent in Arabic writings because of the media revolution in the Arab world and the rise of independent media channels, as well as the rise of the virtual space of the Internet (See for instance Fawzi (2010), Qerat (2008), al-Qwefly (2009), Mady (2010).

¹⁰ An Egyptian protestor, Aljazeera Arabic Live Coverage of the Egyptian Revolution, Egypt speaks for itself, 28/01/2011.

being visible. A consensus on what the public space means cannot be fulfilled even etymologically. In which case, however, whether it is Latin or Arabic, it becomes clear that an etymology of the public space is primarily based on keeping the notion of 'space' as a constant, as an un-problematised notion. Space here is defined only in relation to the term 'public', either as an adjective or a noun. The public space is seen as this space that is characterised by being public, that is, a space that either belongs to the public, or is general, belonging to no one. This space is characterised by being open and is distinct from the private space.

This focus on the characteristics of the public space without problematising the notion of space itself has led to this 'a priori' understanding of public space. The premise that the notion of space should not be problematised and should rather be defined essentially in relation to the term public has led to parts of the literature treating 'space' either as a taken for granted location as such, or as merely an instrument, something that hinders any critical understanding of the public space.

The literature of the public space may be expanded to include notions of the public sphere and the public realm. It may also be contracted to tackle only the physicality of the 'public space'. In this chapter, I will discuss both strands of the expanded literature of the public space, which includes concepts of the public sphere and the public realm, and the public space. The reason for this is that the link between the discursive notion of the public sphere and the physical one of the public space cannot be separated, not only in terms of practice, but also in terms of theory.

The first strand of the literature, which particularly uses the notion of the public sphere (Habermas 1989; Calhoun 1992; Fraser 1992; Benhabib 1992), focuses on the normative, ideological and discursive characteristics of the public space. It questions the ethos on which the public sphere is based and investigates avenues of creating an ideal deliberative platform. This strand of the literature is aimed at creating a political ideal for democratic societies, a safe zone for people to discuss together issues that concern them. This literature develops in a way that sets the conditions for the rise of this ideal sphere where people feel free to discuss issues of common concern. The notion of the public sphere in this strand is used interchangeably with the public space and the public realm, which in spite of their technical differences, rest upon the same

theoretical idea of constructing a site for the people to pursue activities of a collective nature.

The second strand is mainly concerned with the physical settings of public space, the spatiality of the public space, which primarily concerns human geographers. The development of this body of literature takes the shape of examining and studying the physical characteristics of public spaces. Human geographers look at the political and economic conditions and the structures of power that govern planning a city in a particular way and hence define those included and excluded from the public space.

The distinction between the two strands should not give the impression that they are exclusive of each other, which will be discussed in the following section. I am arguing that the relationship between both the public space and public sphere is dynamic, and should be investigated thoroughly for a critical understanding of the notion of the public space. I will particularly focus on two major challenges, which hinder a critical understanding of the notion of the public space. The first challenge is most of the literature's preoccupation with the binary opposition of the public and private in defining the public space. The second is the literature's emphasis on identifying 'a priori' qualities of the public space and idealising them, more precisely, identifying the public space as being a primarily open and autonomous space. Through investigating these two challenges, it will be clear how the literature of the public space reproduced the assumptions that underpin the uses of the notion of the public sphere.

The Public Space and the Public Sphere: A Missing Link?

The notion of the public space is usually accompanied by the notion of the public sphere. There is a general tendency in the literature to either use both the terms public space and public sphere interchangeably or to use them as two strictly distinct categories that should not be overlapped or confused. There are not many significant attempts in the literature of the public space nor the literature of the public sphere that investigate the similarities and differences between the two notions, or the moments in which the public space diverges or converges with the notion of the public sphere. In the literature that uses the notion of the public sphere, for instance, one may find

more emphasis on the discursive and political dimension of public interactions, while ignoring the actual locations of these interactions and the contentions that dominate them. Similarly, theories of the public space have ignored the discourses of political actors taking place in the public sphere, and their impact on shaping, defining and constituting public spaces. The links between these two concepts are largely underestimated, and the intersections between their normative assumptions are also undermined. The literature approaches in defining the public space/sphere are based on the same normative assumptions. Both concepts are defined either by using the binary opposition of public versus private, or through identifying 'a priori' characteristics that define the public space/sphere.

In this section, I will focus on the notion of the public sphere, and then will show how some of the literature of the public space has reproduced the assumptions of the public sphere leading to similar problems that the notion of the public sphere suffers from. This is not to suggest that there should not be a connection between the public space and the public sphere, seeing that it is leading to such problems. On the contrary, in my research the link between the discursive and the material in the making of public spaces is essential, yet the dynamism should not be to copycat the discursive public sphere to understand the physical public space.

The notion of the public sphere was developed by Jurgen Habermas in his seminal work "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere" published in German in 1962 and translated to English in 1989, in which he defined the public sphere as the "sphere of private people coming together as a public" to discuss issues of common concern (Habermas 1989: 29). Habermas was concerned with the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere in 18th and 19th century Europe as an intermediate sphere falling between the 'private realm' represented in the civil society and the family on the one hand, and the state or the 'sphere of public authority' on the other (30-31). Habermas's primary concern is democratic deliberation and political participation within liberal societies, and hence the public sphere for him is an ideal communicative realm that allows for 'rational' deliberation among 'equal' citizens, which asserts the democratic participatory nature of the political system. In other words, the public sphere is this 'realm in our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed' (Habermas 1974: 49).

Habermas (1989) investigated the emergence and decline of the bourgeois liberal public sphere. He defined a number of 'institutional criteria' that are crucial for the formation of the public sphere in the political realm and which are nurtured by communication media. The first criterion is 'social intercourse' which means that the participants of the bourgeois public sphere disregard status in their discussions, and rather depend on 'rational critical arguments', where the relevance and the merits of the arguments are important and not the status of the arguer. As Calhoun (1992) explains, what counts in the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere is both the quality of the arguments as well as the number of the participants¹¹. The second criterion is based on the ability of the public to discuss issues of common concern which were monopolised by the state and/or the church, or as Habermas puts it 'problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned' (Habermas 1989, p.36). This process became possible when the cultural commodities started to be available to a great majority of people and hence they were able to grasp its meaning by themselves. Thirdly, the public sphere, according to Habermas, should ensure the participation of all citizens, where access should not be restricted to certain people. He argues that contemporary media tools like newspapers, magazines, radio and television can be considered as the public sphere's medium that can help reaffirm this criterion (Habermas 1974: 49).

These 'institutional criteria' represent the essential qualities of the public sphere, leading to an idealist definition of the public sphere being open and accessible to everyone, a communicative democratic platform in which equal citizens rationally deliberate issues of common concern and reach consensus, or as Habermas (1996) describes it in his later work 'Between Facts and Norms', the public sphere is a 'network for communicating information and points of view' (p.360). Although Habermas started his project on the public sphere as a historically and geographically bound social political phenomenon, he called for the universality of the ideals of the public sphere, being an important ingredient of democratic societies.

¹¹ This argument is debatable and criticised, where many scholars accused the bourgeois public sphere as being exclusionary, either in respect to gender, this shall include Benhabib, Fraser and Ryan (Calhoun 1992), or yet in respect to publics, as Thompson viewed the bourgeois public sphere as putting itself in opposition to popular movements (Thompson 1995).

The Habermasian public sphere has been criticised by a number of scholars who accuse it of abstraction, idealism, and ethnocentrism¹². Habermas is also criticised for ignoring gender (Fraser 1992, Benhabib 1992, Ryan 1992), disregarding religion (Zaret 1992), discounting social movements and the agency to constitute the public sphere (Postone 1992). Nevertheless, the literature on the public space has particularly criticised Habermas for ignoring the physical locations of the public space by universalising the notion of the public sphere (Gregory 1989, Howell 1993, Low & Smith 2006). For Habermas (1989), the public sphere, as a communicative deliberative platform, was manifested in some physical spaces, like ‘coffee houses’ in Britain, where businessmen exchanged ideas about trade, news, and opinionated journals; the ‘Salon’ in France, which existed in private homes, yet became public and helped in linking the aristocratic public sphere with the newly emerging bourgeois one; while in Germany, the counterpart for the salon and coffee shops was ‘table societies’, where academics and people with different backgrounds gathered (p.12). Nevertheless, Habermas’s insistence on the universality of the ideals of the public sphere undermines the significance of the physical locations in the formation of the public sphere.

Political geographers interested in the politics of the public space have resorted to Hannah Arendt for her more ‘local’ and physically grounded theory of the public realm¹³. Howell (1993) has argued that Hannah Arendt’s work on the public space is far more convenient in linking political theory with geography. He emphasises that ‘Arendt stresses the local and the particular in contrast with Habermas’s public sphere’ (p.315). Seyla Benhabib has differentiated between two understandings of the public space in Arendt’s thought. The first is the agonistic view of the public space, in which Arendt views the public space as the space of appearance, where political bravery and boldness are being expressed and shared with others. In that sense this space is “a competitive space in which one competes for recognition, precedence, and acclaim” (Benhabib 1992: 78). According to Benhabib, this is contrasted to Arendt’s ‘associational’ view of the public space, which arises when “men act together in concert” (Arendt quoted in Benhabib 1992, 78). According to this latter definition, the

¹² See contributions to Calhoun’s (1992) edited book.

¹³ Arendt has even used the notion of the public space rather than that of the public sphere and the public realm

public space is constituted with every collective action whether it is taking place in the street or in a privately owned apartment. But Benhabib's differentiation gives the impression that there are two conflicting public spaces in Arendt's thought, something that is hardly clear. Alternatively, D'Entreves (1994) argues that Arendt's public space of appearance (which Benhabib calls the agonistic view of the public space) is being constantly constituted through collective action. According to D'Entreves, Arendt's public space is 'a potential space that finds its actualization in the actions and speeches of individuals who have come together to undertake some common project' (D'Entreves 1994: 77). Nevertheless, it is obvious that Arendt's public space that is recreated through collective action, allows for a particular list of actions and discourses, which are political activities that are distinct from social activities. In other words, Arendt has also set 'a priori' conditions for the public space that would create an ideal public space.

Whether Arendt's theory is more convenient for geographers in politically understanding the public space than the Habermasian public sphere, or whether Arendt has sufficiently highlighted the physical locations of collective action, the normative assumptions of both Arendtian public space and Habermasian public sphere remain unchallenged by scholars of the public space. Low and Smith (2006) argue that the main problem with public sphere literature is underestimating the geographical importance of the public space. They acknowledge that the weakness of public space literature lies in its inability to move from the public sphere's political and economic theories to the materiality of the public space.

Low and Smith's (2006) edited book 'The Politics of the Public Space' is considered one of the recent attempts to highlight the link between the discursive public sphere and the physical public space. They define the public space as 'the range of social locations offered by the street, the park, the media, the Internet, the shopping mall, the United Nations, national governments, and local neighbourhoods' (p.3)¹⁴. This is indeed a very broad definition that combines both the media and the Internet with

¹⁴ In this definition a diverse range of spaces are put together. Low and Smith were able to combine such diverse spaces through making the public/ private distinction their reference point, in which they focused on the authorities that control access to public spaces, which is quite distinct from private spaces. The public/ private dichotomy will be explained in the following section.

streets and parks. In other words, this definition mixes between what we know as the public sphere, being a communicative sphere, and the public space, being a visible physical location. This broad definition follows from the aim of their book to offer an ‘analysis that takes the geography of the public sphere- public space- seriously’ (Low & Smith 2006: 3). Low and Smith’s attempt is beneficial to my research as they highlight the complementary relation between the notion of the public sphere and that of the public space, while criticising scholars who treated them as being completely separate, or being overlapped. The weakness of Low and Smith’s contribution, however, is that they reproduced the normative assumptions that underpin the uses of the notion of the public sphere, arguing that the public space should be open to everyone.

In his interesting historical political-economy contribution, David Harvey (2006) captures this link between the public space and the public sphere, arguing that ‘some kind of association... has been forged between the proper shaping of urban public space and the proper functioning of democratic governance in the public sphere’ (p.17). According to Harvey, while our encounter with urban public space influences how we act politically, the political ideas that we adopt have a significant impact on the way we understand public spaces. In showing so, Harvey has investigated the public spaces of the Parisian Second Empire and the political implications of its restructuring. He particularly tries to capture the political implications of Haussmann designs of Parisian boulevards and streets, which were meant to privilege the bourgeois and protect their private property. Harvey shows how public spaces of Paris, after the establishment of the Second Empire, reflected the new political discourses of the ruling elite at the time, which aimed at protecting the bourgeois, their property and lifestyle, and hence it was important to design public spaces, particularly the boulevards, in a way that would block the workers and the poor, being a threat to the bourgeois, from accessing these public spaces. Moreover, public spaces were meant to masquerade the huge gaps between classes by turning the boulevards into a ‘spectacle’ that is shiny and glamorous, making the appearance of the poor in such public spaces unwelcomed. Public spaces, accordingly, became spaces for consumption; they turned into de-politicised spaces where political activities could hardly be anticipated. Nevertheless, according to Harvey, this control of the bourgeois over both the public sphere and the public space pushed for the formulation of ‘other’

spaces for the working class and the poor, which turned into sites for political expression against the bourgeois. By the end of the Second Empire, the boulevards of Paris themselves turned into spaces for political expression by those that were marginalised, the workers and the poor, and reflected the political and ideological struggles in the public sphere. Harvey shows, through focusing on the Paris Second Empire, how public spaces are shaped to serve particular classes that control the politics of the public sphere. Harvey's attempt is highly significant in shedding light on the link between the physical public space and the political public sphere, which I will benefit from, particularly in the empirical chapters.

In the following sections I will show how the public space literature has reproduced the normative assumptions of the public sphere, particularly with regard to the binary opposition of the public and the private, and the idealisation of the public space. I will also show how these challenges are not only confined to Western societies, but are also prominent in Middle Eastern studies.

Public/Private Distinction: The Challenge of Binary Oppositions

The public/private dichotomy is central to Liberal thought, and it retains a powerful position within classical and contemporary literatures (Bobbio 1989, Weintraub & Kumar 1997), described by Bobbio (1989) as one of the 'great dichotomies' of Western thought. The bulk of the literature on the public space has reproduced the assumptions of the public sphere on the centrality of the public/private distinction in defining and setting the boundaries of the public space through putting it in opposition to the private space (represented in private homes and premises). Not only has the literature of the public sphere and that of the public space strictly differentiated between the public and the private, but it has also prioritised one over the other.

This prioritisation finds its roots in Greek thought in which the public was considered superior to the private in the sense that it was a manifestation of the collective will (Bobbio 1989). Hannah Arendt's (1958) writings reflected this prioritisation of the public over the private, which pushed her to adopt a strict separation between the public space and the private realm for the purpose of protecting the public space, it being the site for collective political action. Arendt defined public space as the sphere

of freedom, equality and appearance, where citizens' political identities are formulated as equal beings that are free from any kind of rulership; it is 'a sphere where neither rule nor being ruled exists' (Arendt 1958: 33)¹⁵. For her, the private sphere, or the 'household', is the sphere of necessity, it is the place where people are driven 'by their wants and needs' (Arendt 1958: 30), and hence it should be radically separated from the *polis*, or the public space, which is the space of the political. Arendt condemns the invasion of public space by private individuals with their interests, actions, problems and institutions. She describes this as the 'rise of the social', which happens at the expense of the political¹⁶. Arendt sees in the public space a retrieval of the Greek agora, where people participated directly in political life without representation. For her, the public space is crucial for the protection of the political, it is important for the fortification of the political community from the interventions of the private realm and from the domination of the state¹⁷.

However, the Greek prioritisation of the public over the private, that Arendt adopts, was challenged by Roman law with its emphasis on the protection of private property (Bobbio 1989), a trend that was inherited by liberal theorists of the 17th and 18th centuries, calling for a supremacy of individual rights in opposition to both the community and the state. Habermas focuses on the transformations of the European private sphere, which led to the emergence of the 'bourgeois public sphere'. He stresses upon the role of private individuals within the public realm. Unlike Arendt, Habermas believes in a 'complementary relation' between the public sphere and the private sphere, given that the latter represents the milieu through which 'the public, as the bearers of the public sphere, is recruited' (Habermas 1996: 354)¹⁸. Yet Habermas, just like Arendt, did not challenge this public/private dichotomy. On the contrary, his

¹⁵ Arendt's idealism was captured by many critics, including Habermas, who charged her of being captivated by the Greek political philosophy and hence unable to comprehend the phenomenon of power in modern societies (D'Entreves 1994: 9).

¹⁶ The rise of the social according to Arendt undermines core activities of public space; namely judgement and action (Arendt 1958: 38).

¹⁷ Seyla Benhabib (1992) differentiated between Arendt's 'agonistic view of public space' and 'associational view of public space'. In the former the public/private distinction is based on the separation between social and political. In 'associational space' the differentiation between public and private is based on action and hence the spatiality of the public/private distinction is not of great importance for Arendt (p. 77-79). This will be explained later.

¹⁸ Habermas developed his public sphere theory further in his later work by differentiating between the formal and the informal public sphere (the core and periphery public space). He defined public sphere as this social space which comes to being when individuals act communicatively (Habermas 1996: 360).

theory is particularly based on this separation between the public and the private and the ability of 'reasonable citizens' in holding the two positions of being private individuals and public citizens. Nancy Fraser (1992) argues that adopting this public/private dichotomy aims at preventing some issues from being discussed in public, particularly those pertaining to gender.

It is important to note, however, that the distinction between public and private takes various shapes and rests on different bases. Jeff Weintraub (1997) argues that 'the public/private distinction... is not unitary, but protean. It comprises, not a single paired opposition, but a complex family of them, neither mutually reducible nor wholly unrelated' (p.2). He presents four types of the public/private distinction: the liberal economic, the republican, the sociability and the feminist. According to Weintraub, in the Liberal-economic model, the distinction between the public and the private is perceived as a distinction between state administration- the public sector, and the market economy- the private sector. In the republican tradition, the distinction is between the sphere of citizenship and deliberation, and the non-political realm or the household. In the third model, which is represented by the work of Philippe Aries, the public space is conceptualised as the sphere of sociability of diverse actors in society. Finally, the fourth model of the public/private distinction is developed by the feminist tradition that puts the family versus the economic-political order (p.7). Yet Weintraub takes the public/private dichotomy for granted, confessing that the meaning of either public or private will only be actualised by putting them in opposition to each other, a trend in Western thought that many thinkers have criticised. Raymond Geuss (2001) indicates that "we do not have a clear grasp, not even a rough-and-ready non-theoretical grasp, of the two categories of public and private as marking out two clearly distinct domains" (p.109). Feminist theorists have posed a real challenge to the public/ private dichotomy, stressing that the distinction is meant to suppress issues related to gender from being public. They have argued that the 'personal is political' (Pateman 1989, Gavison 1992, Fraser 1992).

Binary oppositions are so central to Western thought; they originated from the structuralist linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, according to which meaning is derived from placing two contrasting concepts in opposition to each other (Culler 1986: 102). The aim of this binary system is to derive meaning by contrasting opposing

concepts against one another so that each concept is defined by what it is not, like good and evil, presence and absence and certainly public and private¹⁹. Derrida argues that understanding language in terms of binaries is the product of metaphysical conceptions that we inherited and are unable to question (Derrida 1978). He has argued that having a clear distinction between the public and the private is impossible and that the public/private dichotomy will always be threatened and vulnerable to contemporary discourses on friendship and sexuality (Derrida 1997). For Derrida, these binary oppositions are governed by ‘violent hierarchy’, in which one concept controls the other and is superior to it. This has been discussed earlier with reference to the Greek philosophy and Roman law. In the public space/ private space binary opposition, it is the public that is considered superior to the private. Derrida’s suggestion is to deconstruct these binary oppositions and to adopt a more liberating perspective towards language, which can be found in his concept of ‘différance’. Différance explains Derrida understanding of language, where he radicalises Saussure’s difference system of language, by showing the complexity of signs and language where the system of signs dynamically motivates difference of meaning as well as deferred meaning. Différance is a crucial term for Derrida. It reflects the changing nature of text and concepts, where différance is the combination of two terms: difference and deferral, where the meaning of the text is moving, it is always postponed, temporal but never fixed (Derrida, *Différance*, 1991/ 1972)²⁰. Derrida’s refusal of the binary opposition and his notion of ‘différance’ are useful in challenging the public/ private dichotomy which dominates both the public sphere and public space literature, and which functions as a basis for understanding the public space.

The literature on the public sphere has differentiated between the public and the private sphere based on the nature of issues and debates that are discussed in each of them. In the literature on the public space, however, the public/ private dichotomy is based on different factors, particularly the rules of access and property rights. Public spaces, for instance, are claimed to be accessible to everyone, unlike private spaces that are only accessible to those who own them or whom they may allow. Low and

¹⁹ Cf. Derrida 1997, *Of Grammatology*, in which he was deconstructing these binary oppositions.

²⁰ Some contemporary scholars also called for non-foundational basis for the public/private distinction (O’Sullivan 2009; Mahajan 2009)

Smith (2006) have stressed the centrality of the public/ private distinction in defining the public space. They have argued that the public space had been differentiated from the private space according to 'the rules of access, the source and nature of control over entry to a space, individual and collective behaviour sanctioned in specific spaces and rules of use' (p.3). Accordingly, if the private space is accessible to selected individuals, then the public space is accessible to everyone, and if access to the private space is controlled by those who own this space, then access to the public space is usually controlled by public authority, or better not controlled at all.

Other key literature on space, which does not discuss the notion of the public space as such, has refuted binary oppositions of different kinds. Lefebvre (1991) in his seminal book on 'The Production of Space' refutes the binary opposition of mental/ physical space. Lefebvre develops a 'conceptual triad' to help understand the production of space and which signifies the 'three moments of social space': 1) spatial practices, 2) representations of space, and 3) representational spaces. Lefebvre articulates this conceptual triad on space to avoid binaries and dichotomies that dominated theoretical writings. As Goonewardena et al. (2008) put it, Lefebvre's conceptual triad undermines the discourse/ practice dichotomy (p.137). Indeed, Lefebvre's emphasis on 'representational space' as lived space, challenges the dichotomy of 'discourses of space', or how space is portrayed and represented, and 'spatial practices' of space with the likelihood of having a third possibility in which the space is both experienced and lived. Lefebvre's main concern in 'The Production of Space' was to stress the process through which space is produced, and the interactions between various factors that lead to the production of space in a particular way. Accordingly, Lefebvre's space is a complex one that can hardly be defined through all kinds of binary oppositions. Following the same line of thinking, David Harvey (2006) argues that it is very difficult to separate the public from the private realm. Harvey has shown the symbiotic relations between public spaces, commercial/institutional spaces and private spaces, arguing that they cannot be separated from one another and if we are to change our understanding of public spaces, we have to start working on transforming our understanding of both private and institutional spaces (p. 32)²¹.

²¹ He also stressed the linkage between political public sphere and the spatial public space. He maintains that it is impossible to create a public sphere that encourages political participation in an

Ed Soja (1999) draws on Lefebvre in refuting binary oppositions. He formulates his concept of the 'Thirdspace' to challenge the binary oppositions of the 'ideal/ material space' and 'the subjective/ objective space', which he argues have dominated the literature of human geography and represent what he called 'Firstspace- Secondspace dualism' (Soja 1999: 267). Soja argues that this refusal of binary oppositions in human geography started with the writings of Foucault and Lefebvre in the 1960s. Soja defined the Thirdspace as a 'lived space... portrayed as multi-sided and contradictory, oppressive and liberating, passionate and routine, knowable and unknowable. It is a space of radical openness, a site of resistance and struggle... it is a meeting ground, a site of hybridity' (Soja 1999: 276). Soja's 'Thirdspace' shows how a space can include contradictory characteristics, and hence challenges binary oppositions and dominant dichotomies. As I will show later, the public space could be considered an example of Soja's conceptualisation of the 'Thirdspace'- not a third space falling between the private space and the space of public authority as Habermas noted- but rather a third space where the public space is multi-sided and contradictory, which is particularly evident in Middle Eastern contexts. Through focusing on the Egyptian case study and the making of public spaces in various moments of contention, it will be clear that the distinction between the public and the private cannot be used for a critical understanding of the public space. Notions of public and private are always contested and constituted; to use Derrida's words they are always temporal and deferred. Political actors are engaged in a process of continuously defining and re-defining public spaces, a process that is ongoing and never settled, while public spaces are implicated in defining and redefining political actors and meanings of public and private, a process that cannot be simply confined to an opposite process of defining the private space.

In much of the literature on the Middle East, the public/private distinction is also a prominent theme; however, the mainstream trend is not in favour of the separation between the two dichotomies. Studies on Egyptian public space, for instance, show the importance of personal experience in shaping one's attitudes towards participating in public life. On another hand, it also shows the role of society in transforming

urban setting featured by 'segregated suburbs, gated communities, [and] privatised spaces' (Harvey 2006: p.17).

meanings of privacy and intimacy (Singerman 1995, Ismail 2006). Singerman (1995) illustrates this tension between intimacy and publicness while discussing discourses on sexuality in Egypt's popular quarters. She argues that '(i)n Egypt, because of constant public discourse on sexual propriety and gender relations, people are aware of what is considered acceptable and unacceptable public behaviour... (t)he basic rules are clear' (p.94).

The location of religion is another challenge to the public/private distinction in the Middle Eastern experience. Whilst the vast majority of liberal political theorists celebrate restricting religion to the private sphere/ space, most Middle Eastern societies commemorate their faith in the inseparability of religion from public life. Islamic notions like *hisba*, or ordering good and preventing evil, is a manifestation of the blurred line between public and private²². The principle of *hisba* is a controversial one; it is perceived as the responsibility of all Muslims to correct the path of their society, without a distinction between public and private activities. It remains unclear as to when ordering good and forbidding evil moves from verbal advice to physical enforcement. The Islamic principle of *hisba* is not to be separated from the overlapping between religion and politics in Middle Eastern context, which expands socio-religious practice in the public space at the expense of political practice. In Saudi Arabia, the imbrication of Wahabi Islam and al-Saud rule makes use of the principle of *hisba* to limit the political public space by expanding the socio-religious space. *Hisba* is considered the responsibility of the state affiliated committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (*hay'et al 'amr bel ma'rouf wal nahy 'an al monkar*), which acts as a religious police that stops any social practice that contradicts with Islamic *Sharia*. In Egypt, *hisba* lawsuits are filed against scholars and political activists who are deemed blasphemous. These lawsuits are not filed by the state, or its institutions, but rather by members of the public. According to some interpretations of *Sharia*, any Muslim has the right to file a *hisba* lawsuit against any public figure whose ideas and/or actions contradict the application of Islamic rule. The most popular case was that of Nasr Hamid abu Zayd, a former professor of Arabic literature at Cairo University whose work on the Qur'an was controversial and who was convicted with apostasy. A *hisba* lawsuit was filed against him and he was

²² The use of religion in public spaces is not confined to Middle East. Europe during the Middle Ages was a clear example of this.

declared to be divorced from his wife on the basis that a Muslim woman cannot be married to a non-Muslim man²³.

The distinction between social and political, on which Arendt, and other republican theorists based the strict separation between public and private, is highly questioned, particularly in the Middle Eastern context. What used to be social issues are currently at the core of political debates: abortion, the veiling of women and religion. New social movements and socio-religious movements pose a strong challenge to the separation between social and political, and between public and private (Benhabib 1992, 1993, Frazer 1992, Salvatore & Le Vien 2005).

Islamist social movements have been actively present in public spaces. They are particularly relevant in the Middle Eastern context. The work of Carrie Wickham (1997, 2004) on Islamist movements' mobilisation in Egyptian professional associations and university campuses is interesting in many ways. She argues that Egyptian Islamist movements, particularly during the 1980s and early 1990s, managed to mobilise young university graduates by offering jobs and speaking the same language as them; they took advantage of the economic recession of the 80s when the government failed to secure jobs for many university graduates. During the 1992 earthquake, Islamist movements, especially Muslim Brothers, were the first to offer people money, food, clinics and tents. This prompted the Egyptian Interior Minister to accuse the Islamist movements of creating a state within a state²⁴. These Islamist social movements did not function in the private sphere, seeing that religion, which they stand for, should be a private matter. Rather, they functioned in 'public spaces' and managed to claim more spaces than the state or any other 'public' political institution.

²³ The 1990s can be considered the heyday of *hisba* in Egypt. Several *hisba* lawsuits were filed against liberal thinkers and university professors. *Hisba* did not stop at the level of lawsuits but exceeded it to violent actions against intellectuals. Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel laureate, was stabbed by an Islamist who used *hisba* as a justification for his actions against Mahfouz because of his novels. In 1998, the Egyptian government amended the law of *hisba*, posing more restrictions on filing *hisba* lawsuits by individuals.

²⁴ Benjamin Smith (2004) shows the similar success of Iranian Islamists in mobilising the Bazaar, the merchants of which came to have a leading role in the Iranian Revolution.

Having said this, however, other Islamist scholars defend the public/private dichotomy in Islam, arguing that even from a legal perspective Islam differentiates between sins committed in public and those committed in private, where the penalty is harsh in the former because it affects society. Sheikh Rachid Ghannoushi, a formerly exiled Tunisian Islamist scholar who calls for Islamic democracy, has argued that the public/private distinction is significant in Islam and puts a limit on the state's intervention. He narrates a story about the second caliphate Umar Ibn al-Khattab who was informed that a small group of people were drinking wine, a forbidden act, in their private houses. The caliphate entered their house and tried to arrest them with the charge of drinking wine. However, the group protested and accused the caliphate of invading their privacy, their private sphere and eventually they were not tried. According to Ghannoushi, this story shows how privacy is important and highly protected in Islam (R. Ghannouchi 2009, Pers. Comm. 9 September), and the importance of making a clear distinction between the public and private realms.

An Open and Autonomous Public Space?

The literature on the public space, besides reproducing the public/ private dichotomy, also replicates the idealism that dominates the literature devoted to the public sphere. In this section, I will discuss the other challenge of the literature of the public space, in which the public space is being portrayed as an ideal space that is open, accessible and autonomous. I will show how this literature has actually reproduced the assumptions of the public sphere as a democratic sphere for political deliberation, which is open to everyone and autonomous from state interventions.

The public sphere is widely defined in the literature as an open communicative realm that is accessible to everyone, at least in principle. The openness of the public sphere is considered one of the major characteristics that defines, identifies and differentiates the public sphere. For Republican theorists, like Arendt, the public realm functions as a site for citizenship, political participation and collective action, and hence it should be open to everyone to achieve its democratic function (Arendt 1958). Arendt was indeed nostalgic for the Greek *polis* and its agora, which, for her, represented the ideal type of a public realm that was open to everyone and under which conditions the

principle of 'direct democracy' was possible. However, the Greek *polis* and agora were not open to everyone; slaves, women and foreigners were excluded from participating in the 'open' public space offered by the agora, and hence Arendt's unconditionally open public space was criticised for being an ideal model that has never been actualised (Benhabib 1992). Arendt's nostalgia pushed theorists like Habermas to accuse her of being unable to comprehend the phenomenon of power in modern societies (D'Entreves 1994: 9).

Nevertheless, and as stated earlier, Habermas also argues that in principle the public sphere should be open to everyone. He adopted a communicative approach towards the notion of the public sphere, defining it as a realm for 'rational' deliberation (Habermas 1989, 1996). Habermas stresses the importance of peaceful and rational deliberation to reach consensus in the public sphere, which implicitly indicates that the participants of this public sphere should be of particular characteristics to be able to deliberate rationally and even reach consensus. As argued by Fraser (1992), this implicit exclusion of those who cannot pursue 'rational' debate became obvious with Habermas's nostalgia for the bourgeois public sphere of 17th and 18th century Europe, which was exclusively for white, bourgeois males. Not only did Habermas exclude particular individuals from his bourgeois public sphere, he also excluded certain activities. According to Montag (2000), Habermas was intimidated by mass political actions in the streets, which are not preceded by rational discussions. He argued that the civil war in England erupted because of the absence of the public sphere, a place where people can express their ideas about sensitive issues, rather than act. In other words, Habermas argues that discussions in the discursive 'aspatial' public sphere should precede any activities in the physical public space. He aims at imposing his vision of an ideal public sphere, where only rational discussions take place, on the physical public space. It seems that Habermas himself is calling for the replication of the assumptions of the public sphere in the physical public space, only allowing 'rational' activities to take place in the public space.

Both Arendt and Habermas's conceptualisation of the public sphere has been criticised for representing an ideal that can hardly be accomplished (Calhoun 1992, Benhabib 1992, Fraser 1992). Yet, regardless of these criticisms, the literature of the public space has internalised this idealisation, setting 'a priori' qualities that define

the public space. Carr et al. (1992) define public spaces as being 'open, publicly accessible places where people go for group or individual activities' (p.50). Carr et al. (1992) have gone as far as setting a priori qualities for a 'good' public space, which should be 1) 'responsive' in that it responds to the needs of the users, those being 'comfort, relaxation, active and passive engagement and discovery', 2) 'democratic', in which public spaces should 'protect the rights of user groups, they are accessible to all groups and provide for freedom of action but also for temporary claim and ownership. Public space can be changed by public action because it is owned by all', and 3) 'meaningful', where they should 'allow people to make strong connections between the place, their personal lives, and the larger world' (p.19-21).

Even critical geographers like Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey and Don Mitchell, have idealised the public space in their own terms. They are concerned with another dimension of the public space, which is related to its openness, that is, the right to have access to public spaces. Lefebvre (1996) coined his very influential concept of 'The Right to the City', which appeared in a short book in French with the same name '*Le Droit à la Ville*' in 1968, directly before the workers' and students' uprisings. In his book, Lefebvre was concerned with the right of people from different classes and background to 'inhabit' the city, and experience living in it, a right which he characterised as being always contestable and conflicted. Lefebvre (1996) defined the right to the city as 'a demand and a cry' (p.158), to the right to 'urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of these moments and places' (p.179). Lefebvre was concerned with the city and its public spaces that are absolutely different from the village that he came from. Life in the city is experienced in public, where heterogeneous people are able to express themselves and their views about the city. Nevertheless, as Lefebvre notes, the contemporary city is a 'bourgeois city' (Mitchell 2003: 18), it is the product of capitalist modes of production; it is formulated by the dominant class who 'inhibit' others from having access to the city and its public spaces, from 'inhabiting' the city and taking part in its formulation.

It is clear that Lefebvre was actually aiming at replacing the current power structure, which produces a 'capitalist city', with yet another structure that allows for everyone

to access the city and define it. In a way, he was calling for the substitution of a capitalist structure with yet another structure that will allow for the right to the city, a right that ‘manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualisation in socialisation, to habitat and to inhabit. The right to the *oeuvre*, to participation and *appropriation* (clearly distinct from the right to property), are implied in the right to the city’ (Lefebvre 1996: 174)²⁵. Although Lefebvre’s account of the contemporary city, being capitalist and alienating various groups from their ‘right to the city’, captures the gloomy reality of the city in industrial societies, his call for restructuring the power relations that underpin the city reflects Lefebvre’s implicit idealisation of the city and of its public spaces. Like public sphere theorists, Lefebvre sees the city as a space that should be open to diverse people to live, experience, and formulate, a place that accommodates diversity and heterogeneity²⁶. Lefebvre acknowledges that the right to the city will always be struggled for, yet the very fact to argue for an ‘a priori’ right to the city, makes the city and more precisely public spaces, superior spaces that are predefined as being open, accessible and autonomous. For Lefebvre, although the contemporary city is a capitalist city, it is not as open, accessible or autonomous from the modes of production as it actually should be.

Following the same line of thinking, while borrowing the same title even, Don Mitchell’s ‘The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space’ reiterates Lefebvre’s main arguments. Mitchell (2003) was also concerned with various questions that are related to this right to the city including ‘who has the right to the city and its public spaces. How is that right determined- both in law and on the streets themselves? How is it policed, legitimized, or undermined? And how does that right- limited as it usually is, contested as it must be- give form to social justice (or its absence) in the city?’ (Mitchell 2003: 4).

²⁵ Italics from original

²⁶ David Harvey discusses Lefebvre’s concept of the ‘right to the city’, and was concerned with social justice and public spaces, see Harvey (2008). He seems to agree with Lefebvre’s aspirations for a city that is accessible for everyone. In a discussion on his new book Harvey’s (2012) ‘From the right to the city to Urban revolution’, I asked Harvey if the time has come for us to abandon this romanticist conceptualisation of the city and he replied by saying ‘it does not make sense to me to give up on the collective memory of what the city could be or should be’ (LSE 12 May 2012).

Mitchell argues that the right to the city is particularly ‘dependent upon public spaces’ (p.5). The openness, accessibility and autonomy of public spaces indicate that the right to the city is being enacted, reflecting the just nature of public spaces. The more open, accessible and autonomous public spaces are, the more people attain their right to the city. For Mitchell, this is not the case nowadays; public spaces are not open to everyone, they exclude and segregate. Mitchell repeats Sorkin’s (1992) question and wonders whether we are experiencing ‘the end of public space?’ in American cities because of increased policing, surveillance and the exclusion of some groups like the homeless and teenagers from public spaces. Like the public sphere literature, Mitchell also idealises the physical public spaces, and expresses nostalgia to the open public space that belongs to the collective public. He clearly expresses this in the following paragraph:

‘(the) public space ... is .. a representation of the good that comes from public control and ownership, as contested and problematic as these may be. This is a corollary of the vision of public space as a place of relatively unmediated interaction: it is a vision of public space that understands a space’s very publicness as a good in and of itself, that understands there to be a collective right to the city. And this vision and practice of public space in increasingly threatened in American city... The threat here is not from the disorderly behaviours of homeless people... but rather from the steady erosion of the ideal of the public, of the collective, and steady promotion of private, rather than democratic ...’ (Mitchell 2003: 137)

Although Mitchell highlights the contestations and the struggles over public spaces, he decided to take sides in these struggles. For him, public spaces should be open to everyone and belong to the people for justice to be achieved. Mitchell confesses that his work is linked to some idealised and utopian images of the public space and the city. He suggests in the introduction of his book that ‘certain forms of normative conceptualisation of the city and of public space- indeed, certain utopian images of what the city could or should be- have been and remain crucial in these politics of the street’ (p.10). The link between the openness of public spaces and justice, and the question of ‘who has the right to the city’ had been a repeated theme for Mitchell, and certainly for Lefebvre before him. The aim of their project is to restructure the city to be more open and more just²⁷. This concern of making the public space more just by

²⁷ See Mitchell interview by Stéphane Tonnelat at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Philadelphia, 2 December 2009, available online: http://www.jssj.org/archives/02/media/public_space.pdf (last accessed 15/12/2011).

expanding the right to the city to everyone pre-assumes the existence of an a priori right to public space that is to be claimed, or re-claimed. This means that an idealisation of the public space runs deep in the work of Lefebvre and Mitchell. It reflects what Doreen Massey (1999) labels ‘the romanticism of public space’, something that my research seeks to challenge by focusing on the process through which public spaces are constituted, while dropping the nostalgia towards the open public space that existed once upon a time.

Political science scholars working on the Middle East have also gone in search of the ideal public sphere or public space; they were involved in a sacred mission to discover, re-discover or create the public space that is open to everyone. Armando Salvatore’s (2007) work on the public sphere in Muslim societies provides the historical roots of the public sphere in Islam that was ‘truly’ public. Salvatore’s arguments are important in the sense that they show the non-Western origins of the public sphere which surf against the mainstream trend that perceives public sphere/space as a solely Western phenomenon. As Salvatore and Eickelman (2004) illustrate ‘the public sphere is thus not limited to “modern” societies. It is the site where contests take place over definition of the “common good” (p.5). These important historical and theoretical contributions have little impact on understanding public spaces in contemporary Muslim majority societies, and particularly those of the Middle East. It ignores conflicts and contestations over physical public spaces and their formulation. It maintains the Habermasian ‘peaceful and democratic’ nature of the public sphere or space.

Dale Eickelman and Jon Anderson (2003) and Marc Lynch (2006) have celebrated the emergence of a new public sphere in contemporary Arab societies that is open to everyone. This new public sphere was the result of the technological revolution, which made communication media available to most people. According to Eickelman and Lynch, the broadcasting of al-Jazeera, al-Arabiyya, BBC Arabic and others, and the widespread use of the Internet has led to an emerging public that is well informed and resistant to authoritarian regimes in the region. Nevertheless, they fail to explain how this emerging public sphere may exert pressure on Arab authoritarian regimes to alter their oppressive strategies. Indeed, the Internet and satellite channels have

created a new medium where people are able to express their views, but it was taking to the streets of Arab cities that had toppled these authoritarian rulers.

Nancy Fraser (1992) made a differentiation between ‘weak publics’ and ‘strong publics’. The former refers to those who might be able to express their views, but remain unable to put any form of pressure on governments and decision-making circles. This shift from weak publics to strong publics, something that we have finally witnessed in the Middle East, is missing from these discussions. It is widely debatable as well whether the new public sphere of the Internet and satellite channels is accessible to everyone; it requires minimum knowledge of new technologies that is not available to the vast majority of Arab societies. In Egypt, for instance, by the end of 2009, Internet users had reached 20.1 million users in a country with 85 million inhabitants²⁸. Moreover, the political mobilisation of this new milieu created by the Internet and satellite is yet to be investigated; an observer of Arab debates would find that a large portion of the emerging milieu is apolitical in essence- extensive debates on the ritualistic dimension of religion, football, and entertainment were predominant before the Arab Spring.

The openness of the public space is also challenged by another aspect. The spread of consumerist culture as a result of liberalisation policies and globalisation in Egypt, as in the rest of the Arab world, imposes more constraints on the openness of public spaces and its accessibility to everyone, transforming them into spaces of segregation that reveals class differences and deepens them (Abaza 2001, 2006a; Denis 2006)²⁹. This has ultimately led to the privatisation of public spaces and the establishment of gated communities that are protected by private security companies and which increase the fragmentation of public spaces and decrease the possibilities for collective action.

Although these studies show that public spaces are neither open nor accessible to everyone through using case studies from the Middle East, they express a sense of

²⁸ International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2011).

²⁹ See Mona Abaza’s extensive work on shopping malls in Cairo, being the new form of public spaces in Egypt. She argued that although shopping malls in Cairo might seem like open spaces for everyone regardless of class and education, they actually deepen class differences and create a feeling of alienation amongst lower classes of society who find themselves unable to fully integrate in this new ‘public’ space.

nostalgia towards a lost public space that was ‘once upon a time’ open and accessible to everyone. These studies idealise the notion of the public space, reproducing the assumptions of the literature that uses the concept of the public sphere, which hinders critical understanding of the process through which public spaces are constituted. In the following section, I will discuss the other ‘a priori’ characteristic that much of the literature on the public space uses to define and distinguish the public space from other space, namely the autonomy of the public space.

The autonomy of the public space has been debated extensively as an important ingredient for defining the public space. The public space is said to be autonomous if it is immune from the interventions of both the state and private individuals (private interests). I have already discussed the complex relationship between the public space and the private realm, and I will now focus on the relationship between the state and the public space, which is not less complex.

Political theorists discuss whether the state should completely refrain from interfering in the public space or whether it should rationally intervene to provide the necessary guarantees to maintain the autonomy of the public space. The mainstream trend in public space literature argues that the state should not interfere in the public space. According to this view, shared by Arendt, Habermas³⁰, Fraser, Harvey and Mitchell, citizens should be able to address issues of general concern and which may be critical to the state. Nancy Fraser (1992), for instance, argues that the public sphere ‘can serve as a counterweight to the state’ (p.134). In his work on the homeless and the People’s Park in California, Don Mitchell (1995) differentiates between two visions of the public space. In the first one, his preferred public space, the state and its coercive power are absent, and the public space functions as a platform for political movements. According to the second vision, the public space is ‘planned, orderly and safe’ (p.115)³¹. Mitchell’s two visions reflect two positions of the state, either to

³⁰ Habermas argued that the autonomy of the public space is possible if it is to be understood along the lines of a bourgeois public sphere that is governed by the principle of rationality (Ideal speech situation) (Habermas 1990: 89). Habermas adopted a procedural approach to rationality. He put conditions for rationality to be actualised (everyone should be given the same opportunity to speak- the ideal speech situation). Alas Habermas’s illustrations were deeply informed by the bourgeois public sphere (Habermas 1991).

³¹ See also Lefebvre’s distinction between representational space (the space that is directly lived) and representations of space (conceptualised space by planners, scientists,...), which Mitchell builds on (Lefebvre 1991: 38-39)

interfere for the wellbeing of the ‘public’ and of the ‘public space’, or not to interfere also for the wellbeing of a greater public and a greater public space. Yet, the state that Mitchell talks about is a representative, legal, institutional and democratically elected state that represents the majority of the population.

In the Middle East, the representatives of the state are not legally accountable and are not democratically elected either; the state does not represent the majority of the population. State intervention is not for the wellbeing of the public or the public space, but rather for its own wellbeing, that is, its survival. Its intervention in the public space does not aim to make everyone ‘feel comfortable’ in Mitchell’s words, but rather to make them afraid and alienated from the ‘public’ space.

The absence of this democratic feature pushed theorists, particularly from the Middle East, to search for alternative actors to take over the state’s role. Egyptian politicians have gone as far as to suggest the intervention of the army in the public space as an alternative to the state in protecting the public (Nafaa 2009)³². In Egypt, political activists are keen to make a distinction between the state and the regime. They see the solution in the atomisation of the state- but not its dissolution- which should allow neutral, non-corrupted parts of the state to perform the role of protecting public spaces. It was not surprising that during the 25 January Revolution Egyptians called upon the military establishment to intervene and protect the protestors in Tahrir Square from the brutality of Mubarak’s security forces. Unlike the Latin American experience, the army troops were welcomed in the streets of Cairo, and protestors were giving them flowers and were taking pictures with them. They were chanting “the army and the people are one hand” (“*al-gish w el sha’b eid wahda*”)³³.

The overlapping between the regime, the military and the state in the Middle Eastern context makes the relationship between the military power and public spaces of great importance. For Nafaa (2009), the army is part of the state, but is distinct from, and even superior to, the regime, and hence it could perform a neutral role in protecting

³² Diaa Rashwan has made the same point in my interview with him 30/4/2010.

³³ This slogan changed after the ouster of Mubarak and SCAF consolidation of power.

the people and the political process³⁴. By the end of 2011, it was clear that the military is unable to perform this neutral role of protecting public spaces and keeping them open for everyone. The military, just like all other political actors, became an active participant in a process of constituting public spaces that reflect their discourses and support their claim to power.

The role of the state in public spaces is very prominent in the Egyptian context, given Egypt's long established state tradition. Moustafa Elwi, a prominent member in the National Democratic Party (Egypt's ruling party before the 2011 revolution) and former head of the political science department in Cairo University, argues that the public space is materialised in whatever space the state is present in (M. Elwi 2009, Pers. Comm., July).

Elwi's definition of public spaces is informed by Egyptian history in which the state's presence in 'public spaces' is unequivocal, either directly or indirectly. Egyptian public spaces from 1952 up until 1967 generally functioned according to Carl Schmitt's (1976) distinction between 'friend and enemy', where those involved in the struggle over the public space should decide which side they belong to, either with the state's ideology or against it. The distinction remained relevant, yet with the decline of the state's ideology, it took a functional twist, where you are either serving the state's interests, narrowly defined as the regime, or you are not. The Egyptian state, particularly under Sadat and Mubarak, used non-state actors, most notably Islamists, to ensure its control over public spaces. However, the relationship between the state and Islamist movements is not static, following specific rules of conduct. It varies between complete contestation, to unlimited support and encouragement. For Beinin and Stork (1997), state that Islamist movements are seen as a challenge to the post-colonial nation states, where they gain strength from the failures of the modern nation

³⁴The call for the military to interfere in the political process in Egypt comes amid debates about the succession to President Hosni Mubarak, and the fear of the brutality of the internal security forces against any civil opposition. Political activists hope that the army will not follow the regime's will to nominate Gamal Mubarak, the son of the president, as the head of the state, given the fact that he is not a military officer and is only supported by businessmen. Some critics think that any political role of the army can hardly be imagined given the de-militarisation process that Hosni Mubarak embarked on during his rule. This call comes after a previous one directed to the judiciary, a part of the state yet quite distinct from the regime in the view of political activists, to have an interventionist role in the political sphere and the protection of Egyptian publics. This was supported by the active role played by judges in overseeing parliamentary elections.

state: corruption, socialism and coercion, and hence the state acts fiercely to contain this threat. Madawi Al-Rasheed (2006) refers to the arrangements between the Saudi government and Islamist Wahabis. She indicates that while the latter were granted great powers in the social sphere, the Al-Saud dynasty enjoys complete control over the political sphere, which stands as an example of cooperative relations between the state and Islamist movements. Sami Zubaida (1997a) argues that Islamist movements are not against the modern nation state; they 'are not continuous with historical Islam but rather are modern constructions influenced by current conjunctures' (p.98).

The troubling role of the state in public space has pushed some scholars to call for its complete withdrawal from public space, to allow for civility and active citizenship. Nevertheless, Zubaida (1997b) alerts to the important role the state should play in public space by providing and protecting a law-driven peaceful environment. Here Zubaida is sceptical of Islamist movements, who may be more authoritarian than the state. Gudrun Kramer (1997) wonders whether Islamist activists are 'sincere' in calling for democracy. Zubaida's (1997a) answer was pessimistic; he sees Islamist associations as treating people as an object for control and reform. The success of Islamists in democratic and fair elections following the Arab Spring tests the speculations of both Zubaida and Kramer.

With all these groups- the state (or more precisely the ruling regime), the military, Islamist movements, political activists- struggling over controlling public spaces, it becomes very hard to define public spaces through referring to their autonomous nature. Even in the most democratic settings, public spaces are managed by a set of rules and regulations. These rules and regulations control who accesses public spaces or uses them. They also decide which activities are to be allowed in public spaces.

In conclusion, it is now clear that the two main characteristics (the openness and the autonomy) that were referred to in the literature to define the public space have not been sufficient in defining the term. Equally unsatisfactory is defining the public space through putting it in opposition to the private space. Having shown how the literature of the public space has reproduced the assumptions of an ideal public sphere being open to everyone and autonomous, this does not mean that my research seeks to argue that public spaces should not be open or autonomous. What my research seeks

to achieve is to remove this ‘should’ from attempts at defining public spaces, be it open or closed, autonomous or controlled. My research challenges the ‘a priori’ qualities that various scholars set to define public spaces, particularly those that characterise the public space as being an ideal space that should be open and accessible to everyone. I aim to challenge the nostalgia towards this ‘once upon a time there was an open and accessible public space’ perspective, and rather to be open to various possibilities on what the public space will look like and who will define it³⁵. These approaches in the literature to define the public space have ignored the struggles over the making and control of public space(s) in plural.

‘The’ public space is not a single, overarching, ideal, democratic, and peaceful space that is available for everyone to use. In practice, we have public space(s), multiple, multi-levelled, constructed by various groups and contested. Public spaces are defined as a result of this struggle between various groups seeking recognition and some sort of legitimacy to their claims. The contestation between these multiple public spaces is an on-going process that takes place repeatedly. It is most evident, however, during major episodes of contention in which the contestation reaches an extreme level where some groups seek to take full control over the public spaces created and controlled by other groups. Recent literature on contentious politics has investigated the relationship between space and contention. Although these studies are limited in number, they have highlighted the significant struggles taking place in spaces, particularly public spaces. Nevertheless, most of these writings focus on contentious politics and hence their aim is not to understand public spaces, but rather to use space theories to enrich their analysis of contentious politics. In the following chapter, I will review some key attempts of contentious politics scholars to highlight the spatial dimension of contentious politics.

³⁵ See Doreen Massey (1999) who calls for a new understanding of space, being open to possibilities and open to the future, in order to cope with new politics.

Chapter 2:

Theoretical Framework and Methodology: Contentious Politics and the making of Egyptian Public Spaces

In this chapter, I will use theories of contentious politics to understand public spaces and their formulation, something that has been largely ignored by the literature of contentious politics. I will also show how the process of constituting public spaces is implicated in defining and re-defining political actors and the constitution of political subjectivities. While paying more attention to the Egyptian case study, I will first review recent attempts in the literature to investigate the spatial dimension of contentious politics. I will then illustrate my thesis contribution to public space theories through making use of studies of political contention.

In the last part of the chapter, I will illustrate my methodology, which includes detailed discussion on the selection of the Egyptian case study and episodes of contention. I will particularly focus on the confrontation between the ruling regime and the different political oppositional groups over the making of public spaces. The contestation results in the construction of various ‘patterns’ of constituting public spaces, which has effects on political contentions. I will particularly show how the ruling regime as well as the various political actors and oppositional groups have constituted Egyptian public spaces of authority and resistance. Public spaces of authority refer to the process through which public spaces are constituted to reflect and support the discourses and practices of the ruling regime. On the other hand, public spaces of resistance refer to the process through which public spaces are constituted to resist the regime’s discourses, and offer alternative discourses to them. It is important to note, however, that various processes of constituting public spaces co-exist together and follow a dominant pattern of constituting public spaces. Through investigating three episodes of contentions that took place under different historical junctures of Egypt’s post-colonial history, I identified three dominant patterns of constituting public spaces, which will be illustrated in detail. This shows

how public spaces are defined and re-defined in a continuous process that is never fixed nor settled.

Constructed Public Spaces and Contentious Politics

The problem with most of the public space literature is the preoccupation with the importance of reaching an overarching definition of the public space that is all encompassing. Few writings, however, have focused on the ‘production of space’, or the process through which public spaces are contested, conflicted and fought for (Lefebvre 1991, Mitchell 1995, Low 1996, Harvey 1996, Low 2000, Mitchell 2003). Nevertheless, as discussed in the previous chapter, these studies have also idealised the public space in their own terms, where they all expressed nostalgia for the public space that was once open to everyone. They investigated strategies of control, surveillance and policing of public spaces, calling for a transformation in the power structure to allow for a more open and accessible space.

Most of these writings come primarily from human geographers, who are particularly influenced by Lefebvre’s (1991, 1996) important contributions of ‘the production of space’ and ‘the right to the city’. Lefebvre argues that ‘(social) space is a (social) product... it serves as a tool of thought and of action... it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet that, as such, it escapes in part from those who would make use of it’ (Lefebvre 1991: 26). Lefebvre’s concern with social space and its production came in reaction to philosophical writings³⁶ on ‘mental space’ (the space of language and discourse) that turns suddenly into writings on social space without sufficient analysis. This relationship between language/discourse and space is crucial to Lefebvre’s analysis on the production of space. He argues that codes lead to the ‘construction’ of social space. For instance, expressions like the street or the square are part of an ‘everyday discourse (which)... describes a social space (and)... correspond to a specific use of that space and hence to a spatial practice...’ (p.16). The interaction between discourses of space and spatial practices creates ‘spatial

³⁶ Like the writings of Kristeva, Derrida and Barthes, Lefebvre also criticised Foucault’s work on space, he argues that “Foucault never explains what space it is that he is referring to, nor how it bridges the gap between the theoretical (epistemological) realm and the practical one, between mental and social, between the space of the philosophers and the space of the people who deal with material things’ (Lefebvre 1991: 4).

codes³⁷, that are necessary for the production of space, and decoding them would make the process of understanding the meaning of social space attainable. In that sense, Lefebvre's project that aims at constructing a theory of space is concerned with the rise and fall of these 'spatial codes'. In other words he is concerned with the discourses and practices, which formulate spatial codes leading to the production of space.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Lefebvre has developed a 'conceptual triad' to help understand the production of space and which signifies the 'three moments of social space': spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces. Lefebvre articulates this conceptual triad on space to avoid binaries and dichotomies that has dominated theoretical writings³⁸. Doreen Massey (2006) in her seminal work 'For Space' has also refuted binary oppositions and offered her influential 'relational approach to space', which is based on three propositions: 'first,.. space (is) the product of interrelations, as constituted through interactions,... second,.. space (is) the sphere of the possibility of existence of multiplicity,... third,.. space (is) always under construction... it is never finished; never closed' (p.9). Accordingly, Massey emphasises the complex nature of social space as a product of social interactions, discourses and material practices. For her, spaces are multiple, heterogeneous and intertwined, and more importantly they are always constituted and constructed endlessly through discourses and practices.

The combination of both discourses and practices, not necessarily in the form of a dichotomy, are essential for the understanding of all sorts of social spaces, including the public space. I will focus on what I will refer to as discourses of authority and resistance. In particular, I will focus on the dynamism between the processes of constituting public spaces of authority and public spaces of resistance, and how they mutually constitute one another. I define public spaces of authority as those constituted by the discourses and practices of ruling regimes and institutions of government. I define public spaces of resistance as those that emerge through the discourses and practices of agents of resistance. These public spaces emerge in

³⁷ Lefebvre was investigating the dialectic nature of 'spatial codes'

³⁸ See Chapter 1 of the thesis. Also see Goonewardena et al. (2008) who argued that Lefebvre's conceptual triad undermined the discourse/ practice dichotomy (p.137).

moments of political contention and are mutually constitutive of one another. As Foucault (1990) rightly indicates ‘where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power’ (p.95). Although public spaces of authority and of resistance are inseparable and mutually constitutive, the political contentions between them are also unavoidable. Tilly and Tarrow (2007) define contention as the process through which political actors make claims that influence each other’s interests. In spatial terms, contention takes place when political actors make claims that challenge each other’s presence, power and control over public spaces. These contentions over public spaces become very obvious during major episodes of contention. Tilly and Tarrow (2007) define episodes of contention as “bounded sequences of continuous interaction, usually produced by an investigator’s chopping up longer streams of contention into segments for purposes of systematic observation, comparison, and explanation” (p.36). During these episodes of contention, conflicts over public spaces become a win-lose game, following a re-configuration of power relations, which necessitates a change in power locations. This happens when stronger political actors that articulate a coherent public discourse move from their public spaces to occupy and re-define other public spaces that were controlled by other political actors that become weaker and are unable to hold their grip on these public spaces.

This becomes clear if one takes the example of Mubarak’s Egypt and the recent revolution that overthrew his regime through occupying *Tahrir* Square. The protestors’ success in gaining full control over *Tahrir* Square followed a long struggle between the ruling regime and oppositional groups. In the last decade of Mubarak’s rule, particularly after the decline of militant Islamism at the end of the 1990s, the ruling regime’s public discourse, that sought legitimacy in return for stability, became weaker. With the decline of the major threat to the state, which had justified the regime’s tough grip over public action in public spaces with the use of martial laws, the regime’s stability discourse came under attack. The regime’s control over public spaces, including universities, mosques, and streets started to wane. Oppositional movements and new political forces, particularly the youth, managed to create new public spaces to oppose the ruling regime. As time passed, it became evident that the

ruling regime's weak discourse was unable to control vital public spaces³⁹, particularly the streets, and that political actors representing stronger anti-Mubarak discourse should step forward to control these public spaces, re-define them and confirm their new power status in the new matrix of power relations. This was most evident in the making of *Tahrir* Square into a public space of resistance. The pro-Mubarak discourse was pushed out of *Tahrir* Square- the largest and most vital square in Egypt and the meeting point of various Egyptian cities- to the secondary square of *Mustafa Mahmoud* in *Mohandessen*. Moreover, following the revolution, counter-revolution discourses were on the rise, transforming another square in Egypt, Roxy Square in the upper-middle class district of Heliopolis, into a space that represented these discourses. The representatives of the anti-revolution discourse were referred to as the 'Roxy people' or literally 'those who belong to Roxy' known in Egyptian colloquium as '*beto*' Roxy'. People who were sympathetic to certain discourses were being identified by the public spaces in which they functioned. People started asking, 'are you *Tahrir* or *Roxy*? instead of asking whether someone was pro-continuing the revolution or anti-continuing the revolution. These examples show how public spaces contribute to the making of political subjectivities and play a significant role in political contentions.

Scholars of contentious politics have recently investigated this important relationship between space and contention. Charles Tilly, the guru of contentious politics, was aware of the significant relationship between contention and space. In 2000, he investigated this issue in his article "Spaces of Contention" in the renowned journal *Mobilization: International Quarterly*⁴⁰. Although Tilly offers a long bibliography of previous studies on contention and space, he stresses that the link between the two needs further investigation, given the importance of space to contentious politics and vice versa. Tilly highlights the symbiotic relationship between space and contention, arguing that both matter for the understanding of one another. For Tilly, space is important for understanding contentious politics and vice versa because: 1) contention

³⁹ It became evident that the Mubarak regime was controlling public spaces through security forces only.

⁴⁰ Both Charles Tilly and William Sewell were supposed to write this article jointly, yet they were unable to produce a joint paper, and hence decided to write separately. Tilly wrote his 'Spaces of Contention' which appears in *Mobilization: International Quarterly* in 2000 at the time when Sewell was writing his 'Space in Contention' as part of 'Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics' in 2001.

does not happen in a vacuum, it always takes place in space, 2) mobilization is affected by the 'everyday spatial distribution', 3) government, being a significant player in contentious politics, arranges some of its power spatially, 4) the everyday political life has its symbolic spatial manifestations which become available for new political forces for adoption, and 5) "contention itself transforms the political significance of particular sites and spatial routines,..." (Tilly 2000: 138-139).

Tilly's first four points answer the question why space matters for understanding political contention. It presents space as a context, a structure that affects contention and shapes it. Space, hence, should be studied as an important factor that results in particular patterns of mobilisation and contention. It was not until Tilly's fifth point that the dialectic relationship between space and contention becomes apparent, and the question of how political contention matters for understanding space, or more precisely the political significance of space, are addressed. Tilly argues that although space affects and shapes patterns of mobilisation and contention, contention changes the political significance of many spaces. That is to say, political contention, which takes place in particular spaces, changes the meanings of these spaces, like revolutions taking place in particular spaces altering the political significance of these spaces, from being spaces for everyday life into being spaces for collective political actions. In Egypt's recent revolution, the contention that took place in *Tahrir* Square for 18 days and which resulted in the resignation of Mubarak, had altered the meaning of *Tahrir* Square. It had transformed it from a space that symbolises Egyptians' everyday traffic problems, into a site for political activism and resistance against the ruling authorities.

While investigating the spatial dimension of contentious politics in London and Paris between 1750 and 1900, Tilly (2000) noted four variations of space-contention which deserve further investigation: the geography of policing, safe spaces, claim making, and control of places as stakes of contention. In other words, Tilly is concerned with spatial contentions arising from the struggle over both security and ownership of political territory. This characterisation of Tilly mirrors similar concerns in public space literature; these are concerns over the ownership of public spaces, and issues of securing and policing public spaces. The first two variations on the geography of policing and safe spaces is relevant to the understanding of public spaces with regard

to three aspects: the policing of public spaces, the state use of public spaces for political ends, and finally the role of non-state actors and oppositional groups in constituting 'safe spaces' to resist state coercion. It is important to note the distinction between the policing of public spaces and their use by the state for political ends. Johnston (1999) argues that policing should be differentiated from police, where the former denotes 'a social function', while the latter refers to 'a specific body of personnel' (p.176-7). In that sense, the state and its police forces are not the only actors in the policing of public spaces⁴¹. On the contrary, members of the public themselves contribute to the policing and surveillance of public spaces based on religious, social or class convictions. Moreover, policing of public spaces is distinct from the state use of public spaces for political ends (Walker and Loader 2009), as the state may provide 'secure public spaces' while blocking political protests against it, or as was the case of Egypt during Mubarak's regime, where public spaces were left unsecured, as the police did not interfere in stopping crimes and sexual harassment, only interfering in political demonstrations. The other two variations of space-contention expressed by Tilly- claim making and control of places as stakes of contention- are related to struggles over who owns and hence controls public spaces in order to stage political claims and gain legitimacy and recognition.

These indeed are key issues for the understanding of public spaces and the contestation over their formulation. The battle over *Tahrir*, for instance, shows the contestation over both ownership and security as the protestor's quote at the beginning of this chapter indicates. There was a fierce confrontation over to whom does *Tahrir* Square belong? Who should have full control over it? And hence who should protect it and to what extend is it secured? This confrontation over ownership and security resulted in the re-making of public spaces as sites for resisting the ruling authority, whether it was Mubarak or the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) that took power after the resignation of Mubarak.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Tilly is primarily interested in the contentious process and hence his investigation of space is to use it for a better and deeper understanding of contention. In that sense, Tilly is not particularly interested in

⁴¹ For policing of public spaces see Johnston (1992) and Jones & Newburn (1998).

space itself, its formulation, and the process through which it is transformed from one form to another, but rather, he is using space as a tool added to his toolkit for analysing contention. Tilly criticised the students of contentious politics for using spatial dynamics, which is quite rare, only to describe contention and not as an important tool to investigate contention further. Tilly developed a model, or a pattern, for investigating spatial dynamics during episodes of contention, through focusing on ‘well-documented’ experiences in London and Paris during the 18th and 19th centuries. He uses a ‘mechanism-based’ approach, which is based on identifying “robust mechanisms of relatively general scope within... episodes (of contention)...” and which “... offers a promise of rich discoveries from comparisons of unlike settings and interactions” (Tilly 2000: 140-152). Several articles followed Tilly’s analysis on space and contention as will be illustrated below.

After three years of his contribution, Tilly (2003) wrote another piece on “Contention over Space and Place” in *Mobilization*’s special issue on Space, Place and Contention. Tilly was reviewing the multiple contributions of this special issue that was particularly concerned with investigating spatial dynamics of contentious politics. He has criticised most of these writings for being descriptive; they describe contentions taking place in particular spaces without much analysis. As Tilly states ‘(the contributors of the issue) neither integrate the analysis of space and place closely with the explanation of contention nor show how the program McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly laid out in *Dynamics of Contention* (DOC) applies to geographic questions’ (p.221).

Tilly’s contribution to space and contentious politics did not stop with these two articles. In his final book on ‘Contentious performances’, Tilly (2008) was revising his major ideas on contentious politics: repertoires and performances. He was particularly concerned with what he refers to as ‘contentious public performances’ and with questions on how and why ‘claim-making performances rise, fall, and change’ (p.11). In other words, Tilly was concerned with visible contentions. These performances take place in visible spatial environments; they take place in public spaces. Tilly’s work on performances could be very useful to understanding public spaces. In a way, these performances (which reflect a mixture of discourses and practices) define public spaces by taking place in them. For instance, using a particular square to support the ruling regime changes this public space from being a

public space that is used by walkers to move from one place to another and which is seen as a space that does not belong to any particular individual or group, into being a public space of authority that is politically used to support the ruling regime, and hence it is being characterised as a space that belongs to the ruling regime. The repetition of particular performances in certain public spaces creates what I call ‘repertoires of public spaces’, in which these performances give a meaning to these public spaces, defining them, their functions and those who are allowed in⁴².

In Egypt, for instance, since 1954 the new ruling junta headed by Gamal Abdel Nasser was involved in a process of constituting public spaces that legitimate their claim to power. The discourses and practices of the ruling junta had defined public spaces as being in effect ‘public spaces of authority’, allowing those activities that supported Nasser and his discourses, labelling public spaces as belonging to the state. The 1968 protests represented a break with this ‘repertoire of public spaces’, re-defining public spaces as spaces of resistance, building another repertoire. In the following chapters on Egyptian public spaces, I will show how political actors had allowed and/or prohibited particular performances (visible practices) and discourses which define public spaces. The repetition of these performances and discourses has defined certain public spaces as belonging to the ruling regime, the Islamists and the protestors. During moments of contention, the various definitions of public spaces become contested, with each type of public space seeking to dominate the others, through struggling for greater visibility and control of more territory. This shows how theories of contention can be very useful in understanding public spaces.

The second, yet related, attempt to link contention and space came from William Sewell. Like Tilly, Sewell noted in his paper ‘Space in Contention’ that he was meant to write this piece in collaboration with Charles Tilly, and that although they never managed to write it together, Sewell has been influenced by his conversations with Tilly on space and contentious politics. Like Tilly, Sewell highlights the importance of investigating the spatial dimension of contention. Yet Sewell pays more attention

⁴² According to Tilly (2008), ‘rapid changes in political contexts’ which take place during episodes of contention ‘offer more stimuli to radical, rapid innovation in performances. But most of the time political contexts change incrementally. As a result, so do performances’ (p.12).

to the concept of space and the process through which social movements had ‘produced spaces’ during revolutionary times.

Sewell (2001) has followed the trend in social sciences that characterises space as a social structure that encompasses social processes. Yet Sewell stresses the duality of this structure⁴³, and hence of space, as being both a container and a product of social interactions. Space for Sewell is like any other structure (as defined by Giddens), both constraining and enabling for human activities and collective actions. In that sense, space is inseparable from contentious politics, defined as “concerted social action that has the goal of overcoming deeply rooted structural disadvantages” (Sewell 2001: 55), including those of a spatial nature. Sewell is concerned with ‘spatial agency’, in which he seeks to uncover the process through which movements involved in contentious politics alter their disadvantaged spatial structures. He argues that in spite of the fact that states and established institutions can have significant impact on spatial structures and the physical environment, and although social movements have to accept spatial structures as they are, they can also “produce space... by changing the meanings and strategic uses of their environment” (Sewell 2001: 56).

Sewell has gone further by discussing key concepts reflecting the interactions between space and contentious politics. The most significant of these include co-presence and spatial routines. Co-presence means bringing individuals and groups into each other’s presence to allow for interactions and collective activities. Sewell has mentioned that it is bound to the spatial environment. Supporters of social movements, for instance, seek to achieve co-presence with each other and with fellow citizens in public spaces. According to Sewell, this increases the power of these social movements and the pressure they put on the ruling regimes. This co-presence, however, is determined according to spatial routines, which refers to social performances in particular places. Spatial routines are very close to the term ‘repertoire of public spaces’ which I developed while discussing Tilly’s (2008) concepts of 1) performances and 2) repertoires of contention, and their link to the notion of the public space. Sewell shows how these spatial routines determine

⁴³ Sewell is adopting Anthony Giddens’s (1976) account of structure being empowering and ‘enabling’ and not merely constraining to human activities.

contentious events and the strategies of social movements. Nevertheless, Sewell has not mentioned how these spatial routines come into being; he has ignored the discourses that allow or constrain certain practices to take place in particular spaces, something that my thesis will highlight through focusing on both discourses and practices that create public spaces and their repertoires.

Sewell discusses, however, the importance of power relations of space-contention dynamics in what he called the ‘spatiality of power’⁴⁴. He has emphasised that “space is an object and a matrix of power... power over people... by controlling the spaces where people live and work” (Sewell 2001: 68). Like Tilly (2000), Sewell is interested in the issue of public space security. He has mentioned policing and control over public spaces by the ruling regimes, and the counter safe spaces⁴⁵ that are constructed by social movements to resist the power of the regime’s controlled public spaces.

In his paper, Sewell develops a mutually constitutive relationship between ‘spatial structures’ and ‘spatial agency’. Regardless of his emphasis on the structural nature of social spaces, he is aware of the instances in which movements involved in contentious politics alter ‘spatial structures’ to their advantage, regaining ‘spatial agency’. By ‘spatial agency’ Sewell means ‘the ways that spatial constraints are turned to advantage in political and social struggles and the ways that such struggles can restructure the meanings, uses, and strategic valence of space’ (p.55). In other words, Sewell is arguing that there is always a chance for spatial structures to be altered, changed and transformed from being a constraint into being an advantage. Nevertheless, Sewell’s concept of ‘spatial agency’ is misleading for it refers to the agency of the actors to alter spatial structures. Spatial agency should refer to the ability of the space to produce subjects, and not to the subject’s ability to change space. In the previous chapter I showed how public spaces should not be pre-defined as open, accessible and autonomous spaces, and should rather be understood through examining the discourses and practices of the various political actors that lead to their constitution.

⁴⁴ For further illustrations on the spatiality of power see Foucault (1980) *Power/ Knowledge*.

⁴⁵ Sewell has mentioned that he owes the notion of safe spaces to Charles Tilly.

Sewell explains these moments of ‘spatial agency’, along with a further illustration of space-contention dynamics, through focusing on two examples: the pro-democracy movement in Beijing 1989 and the French revolution 1789-94. Sewell’s analysis of these two contentious events is illuminating, and offers a good example for analysing the importance of spatial analysis in understanding contentions. Nevertheless, like Tilly’s attempt, it has focused on space as a tool to understand contentious moments and not vice versa.

Tilly and Sewell’s loyal students of contentious politics have followed their masters’ footsteps, shedding light on the importance of spatial analysis to the understanding of contention. These efforts led to the publication of a special issue of the renowned *Mobilization* journal on ‘Space, Place and Contention’⁴⁶. The papers of this issue made ‘the contentious process’ their subject of study. Space itself was not problematised; it was investigated as an important element that represents both a constraint and an opportunity to the contentious process. And in spite of some mentions of the dynamics between space and contention, and the impact both had on one another, space has remained an un-problematised territory for contentious politics.

Martin and Miller (2003) state clearly that the aim of their paper is to “discuss how a spatial perspective can produce a more illuminating understanding of how people perceive, shape, and act upon grievances and opportunities” (p.143). In other words, they investigate spatial dynamics for a better understanding of people’s behaviour in political struggles. Martin and Miller criticised previous research that investigated the relationship between spatial dynamics and contention. They argued that with very few exceptions most of these studies remain ‘aspatial’ for not exploring how space affects key concepts of contention like identities, political opportunities and resources.

⁴⁶ Sewell (2001) had noted that Political Geography Journal and Social Science History had published a special issue that linked issues of contention with spatial analysis in 1994 (prior to the Mobilization special issue). The Journal of Political Geography had also published a special issue that aimed at highlighting the spatial dynamics of political struggles and contention, the theme of this special issue being “Empowering Political Struggle”. It particularly focused on spaces of resistance (Staeheli 1994, Lake 1994, Steinberg 1994), empowerment and spatial dynamics (Miller 1994, Blomely 1994, Staeheli and Cope 1994) and also the contestation over spaces (Zapolsky 1994). Another special issue came from Social Science History in 2000 and its theme was “The Working Classes and Urban Public Space”. Some interesting pieces include Rosenthal’s (2000) paper on protest and fear in the history of Latin America’s public spaces and Witwer’s (2000) paper on ‘Unionized Teamsters and the Struggle over the Streets of the Early Twentieth Century City’.

Accordingly, they selected some key concepts of contentious politics from McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's 'Dynamics of Contention', and explained their spatial relevance, particularly in relation to notions of space, place and scale. In Tilly's (2003) words, Martin and Miller were "plucking mechanisms from the (Dynamics of Contention) catalog and showing they have implications for the spatial distribution and connection of contentious activities" (p.221).

In doing so, Martin and Miller adopted Lefebvre's definition of space as 'socially produced' (Lefebvre 1991). They 're-produced' his differentiation between three types of social spaces into: 1) perceived spaces (spatial practices according to Lefebvre, indicating the everyday practices that guarantee the continuity and consistency within particular social spaces), 2) conceived spaces (or representations of space, these are the 'codes' attached to social spaces that give meaning to them), and 3) lived space (or representational spaces, which are what Lefebvre calls 'the space of "inhabitants" and "users"') (Martin & Miller 2003: 146; Lefebvre 1991: 33-39).

They showed how this characterisation of space can be useful in understanding contention as it directs attention to spatial inequalities, which are perceived, conceived and lived by the inhabitants of these spaces, leading to the eruption of contention.

Nevertheless, Martin and Miller also stressed that space should not be only defined as a social product that has no agency of its own. They quoted Massey, in Massey and Allen (1984), who argues that 'spatial distributions and geographical differentiation may be the result of social processes, but they also affect how those processes work. 'The spatial' is not just an outcome; it is also part of the explanation' (p.4). They also referred to Lefebvre's acknowledgment of spatial contradictions allowing social contradictions to be expressed. They have argued that 'the spatial dimension of context- e.g., how key actors, organisations, and institutions relate to and affect other actors, organisations, and institutions across space- plays a crucial role in shaping the operation of mechanisms and processes (of contention)...(yet) spatiality is both context for and constitutive of dynamic processes of contention' (p.149). They make

similar conclusions on the other two geographical concepts of place and scale, showing the duality in the dynamism between the spatial and the contentious.

In the rest of their paper, Martin and Miller focused their attention on key concepts of contention. In illustrating the spatial dynamics of contention, they focused on two important mechanisms of contentious politics, borrowed from McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's 'Dynamics of Contention' project, namely certification and brokerage⁴⁷. They argued that spatial dynamics affect the functioning and the operation of these two mechanisms. For certification, which is defined as 'the validation of actors, their performances, and their claims by external authorities' (McAdam et al. 2001: 145), they explained that certification is dependent upon the discourses of the surrounding political spaces. In other words, the recognition of political actors, their claims and performances is dependent upon the symbolism of the surrounding political spaces. Accordingly, political actors can stage their claims for recognition in particular spaces and not in others.

Nevertheless, this ignores the fact that political actors and social movements seek to change the discourses attached to particular spaces in order for their claims to be recognised, as Sewell (2001) has argued. If Martin and Miller are right in their argument that certification is bound to discourses and symbols attached to particular spaces, then massive political collective action should have been impossible in Tahrir Square, where discourses of chaos, traffic jams, state bureaucracy and state security were dominant. However, political actors incrementally managed to alter the symbolism of Tahrir Square into a site for political resistance. In Egypt, political actors challenged the polity's socio-spatial order to achieve certification. As protestors in Tahrir said during the 18 days occupation of Tahrir Square, '(it) now belongs to us and not to the regime, ...we will protect it and keep it secured'⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ They have also identified three main categories of contentious mechanisms in the 'Dynamics of Contention' project. These categories of mechanisms are environmental mechanisms, cognitive mechanisms and relational mechanisms. While illustrating these three categories, Martin and Miller's bias towards the second definition of space (space that shapes contention) becomes evident. They showed how spatial configurations had informed and impacted these mechanisms.

⁴⁸ These were the words of a group of protestors in Tahrir Square during the revolution, Aljazeera Live coverage, January 2011.

Martin and Miller acknowledged this significant role of political actors in altering their spatial realities in their discussion of the second mechanism of contention: brokerage. According to Martin and Miller (2003) 'brokers are people or organisations who can break down a variety of everyday spatial barriers and build new connections across space... it is brokers' spatial practices that allow them to foster communication among a variety of social sites' (p.152). In spite of highlighting the possibility for political actors to shape their spatial surroundings through 'brokerage', Martin and Miller returned to their definition of space as a context that constitutes contention. They argued that "brokers' spatial practices- and those of the individuals or groups they connect together- operate within conceptions of space that influence and regulate where people live or travel, how they get from place to place, and with whom they interact" (p.152).

In spite of trying to keep their paper balanced between the two definitions of space as both constitutive of contention and a context for them, it seems that Martin and Miller are biased towards the second definition of space as being a context that shapes and impacts contention. This bias has been also dominant in the rest of the articles in the *Mobilization* journal special issue. Wendy Woldford (2003), for instance, shows how spatial configurations had informed the decision of members of the Movement of Rural Landless Workers (MST) in Brazil on whether to join to the movement or not. John Guidry (2003) has done the same, by comparing how citizenship claims of two social movements in Brazil had differed according to the opportunities and the obstacles the space had imposed on them.

'Street Politics' of the Middle East?

In spite of their rarity, Middle Eastern studies on contentious politics also explored this relationship between space and contention. These studies give detailed accounts on social struggles between ordinary citizens and the state, which take place in spatial settings in particular Middle Eastern countries. The most significant of these writings is Asef Bayat's (1997a, 2010) in which he focuses on every day practices of Middle Eastern ordinary citizens that take place in public spaces. In his seminal book 'Street Politics', Bayat (1997a) focused on the 'poor movement' in Tehran and their

resistance to the oppressive measures of the state in order to survive through making use of public spaces, like the street⁴⁹. He was particularly concerned with the political implications of the urban poor everyday practices in Tehran. These ordinary practices of the poor, according to Bayat, had largely been ignored by scholars who were pre-occupied by major political events associated with the Iranian revolution. These ordinary everyday activities were also ignored because they were largely quite ordinary and non-confrontational- at least initially.

In this book, Bayat highlights the spatiality of the conflict between the poor and the state. Spatiality is indeed a significantly important factor in Bayat's analysis of the poor people's strategies to survive in the Middle East. The 'street' represents a significant tool for the poor to survive, being the place that not only witnesses their daily activities but more importantly makes them visible and hence grants them the legitimacy that they seek. This pushed Bayat to develop his significant contribution of 'street politics', which reflects the relationship between contention and space. Bayat defined 'street politics' as 'a set of conflicts and the attendant implications between a collective populace and the authorities, shaped and expressed episodically in the physical and social space of the streets- from the alleyways to the more visible sidewalks, public parks, or sport places' (p.15). In this definition, Bayat highlights the dynamics between conflicts and streets, or more broadly between contention and physical public spaces.

Bayat labelled these everyday ordinary activities of the urban disenfranchised poor which take place in Middle Eastern streets the 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' which he defined as 'silent, patient, protracted, and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive hardships and better their lives' (p.57). According to Bayat, this 'quiet encroachment' of the poor is directed towards achieving individual and personal gains. The activities of 'quiet encroachment' are not political in themselves. They are not meant to challenge the political authority as such; nevertheless, these ordinary practices that are not political in themselves do turn political. The 'quiet encroachment' of the poor turns political

⁴⁹ Like Bourdieu, Bayat puts more emphasis on practices in public space, without giving much attention to the discourses that could possibly inform these practices.

when they feel their gains are threatened. Bayat argues that the struggles of the poor and their quiet encroachment start as individual, atomised activities that have no political aim as such, yet they turn to be collective, audible and political when the gains of the urban poor are 'threatened'. He argues that although the advances of the urban poor to acquire spatial gains are made quietly, gradually and individually, their activities quickly turn loud and collective when they feel that their gains are endangered. These threats usually come from the state which, according to Bayat, interferes when 'the cumulative growth of the encroachers and their doings pass beyond a tolerable point' (p.14). Bayat portrayed the state as being a dormant actor that remains silent while poor people take over streets and public spaces. Nevertheless, it suddenly moves against the poor when their activities go beyond 'a tolerable point'.

Bayat treats public spaces as containers of everyday practices of ordinary people that turn political when two factors are fulfilled. The first factor, according to Bayat, is the active use of the public space, which represents a challenge to the ruling authority that aims at keeping public spaces passive and orderly. The second factor that turns public spaces into political sites and gives rise to street politics is the development of 'passive networks' that are based on instant, non-organised communication among atomised individuals who use public spaces. Bayat criticised Tilly for emphasising the importance of 'active networks' for political collective actions, in which individuals participating in collective actions should have an active network among each other in which they communicate, share information and organise. According to Bayat, these active networks are not crucial to street politics. That is because the "street as a public place possesses this intrinsic feature, making it possible for people to mobilize without having an active network" (p.16). The street, as a public space, allows atomised individuals to recognise their shared identity and start to identify their common threat. For Bayat, passive networks turn active when those atomised individuals recognise a threat to their benefits. Nevertheless, in his analysis, Bayat did not answer the pressing question of what makes the street, or any other public space, 'by default' available for collective actions without some sort of co-ordination and active altering of its features. Bayat argues that the street has some 'intrinsic features that makes it in an ad-hoc position for collective activities. If that is the case, then why do collective actions take place in particular streets and not in others? It is not

because the street has ‘intrinsic features’ but because political actors, including those ordinary people who get involved in political contention, have managed to transform particular public spaces from being ‘passive spaces’ into ‘active spaces’, or have transformed certain public spaces from supporting the ruling regime or at least being indifferent to being dissident spaces.

According to Bayat, poor men and women resort to the quiet encroachment of urban spaces for two reasons; the first is to redistribute social goods, most notably public spaces, and the second is to attain autonomy from public authority that is both political and cultural. Bayat treats public spaces as a ‘social good’ that the poor seeks to redistribute, attain and occupy. He does not problematise the notion of the public space, but rather takes it for granted, as a space available for the poor to claim for themselves and occupy. The street, in Bayat’s terms, is available for the poor, waiting for them to make use of it, or more precisely to ‘encroach’ and claim it for themselves. In other words, Bayat takes the street and the notion of space generally, for granted. He portrays ‘the street’ as a space readily available for the poor to claim in order to achieve individual benefits.

In that sense, Bayat treats the street, as a container of the struggles that are taking place between ‘a collective populace’, or the poor in his analysis, and the state. Bayat fails to see the impact of such conflicts and struggles on the street and other public spaces. He did not problematise the street, or the process through which the street is transformed into a space for confrontations. Secondly, Bayat’s sympathy towards the poor people and their legitimate claims make him idealise the street and the public space, being the spaces that give voice to the subaltern and the marginalised. For him, the street is the only location for un-institutionalised groups to express themselves. It is portrayed as the space of the marginalised, a space for those with no voice; it gives voice to the voiceless. Thirdly, Bayat ignores the process through which states are involved in a process of defining public spaces, not only through security, but also through various strategies that aim at defining public spaces in an apolitical manner, including failed urban planning, nationalism, apolitical Islamism and focusing on foreign policy issues. Bayat ignores these strategies developed by the ruling regime to define public spaces. He also ignores the efforts of various actors to re-define public spaces in a different manner to allow for dissent and resistance. Fourthly, Bayat’s

focus on the actions of the poor makes him ignore the discourses behind their actions and the meanings that these actions have over public spaces. If one agrees with Bayat about the importance of focusing on the actions of the poor, then one has also to think of the meaning of these actions, not only politically and socially, but also spatially, something that Bayat misses. Bayat's concern with the practices comes at the expense of discourses and meanings. Bayat expresses this openly when he distanced himself from the new social movements' literature by saying that although they pay much attention to the meanings and identities, he, contrarily will pay particularly attention to actions. Bayat's move could be explained by focusing on the poor whom he argues lack 'clear leadership, ideology, or structured organisation' (p.7). In that sense, it may be justified, as Bayat argues, to focus on the practices and the actions of those people, where tracing their discourses is quite difficult given the lack of leadership and the atomised nature they have. Nevertheless, it is almost impossible to separate discourses and practices. Bayat ignores the meanings of people's actions on defining the streets and other public spaces. He fails to investigate how discourses as well as practices define and re-define streets and public spaces, and only focuses on how spaces shape poor people's struggles.

Bayat renews his interest in contention, space and the Middle East with another book published in 2010. In his book 'Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East', Bayat investigates issues of change and agency in the Middle East. His focus is on the processes through which people 'discover and generate new spaces within which they can voice their dissent and assert their presence in pursuit of bettering their lives' (Bayat 2010: ix). Bayat emphasised that his book is about the 'art of presence', or the ability of ordinary citizens to confirm their presence in public spaces to express their dissent, rage and non-satisfaction with their political, economic and social conditions. Bayat's analysis is interesting and is certainly an eye opener at the time where political stagnation dominated the scene of the Middle East. The book was published in 2010, only one year before the Arab Spring had swept the region. Nevertheless, just like his analysis in previous works, he takes the streets and hence the public space for granted. Bayat repeats that the 'urban public space continues to serve as the key theatre of contention' (Bayat 2010: 11). In other words he conceptualises the urban public space as a 'theatre', a container for political contention. An open space that is available for marginalised people of the Middle East

to take advantage of and to simply express their presence in such spaces. Bayat stays silent on the process through which people define and constitute public spaces as a first step prior to their presence in them. He remains silent on the discourses and practices that precede people's presence in the streets, these discourses and practices that allow such presence in the first place. Unlike his previous work on street politics of the poor movement in Tehran, in which Bayat focused on practices at the expense of discourses, in 'Life as Politics' he acknowledges the discursive dimension of street politics. This 'comprehensive' view of the 'street', as an urban public space, is expressed in Bayat's words as follows:

'urban streets not only serve as a physical space where conflicts are shaped and expressed, where collectives are formed, solidarities are extended, and "street politics" are displayed. They also signify a crucial symbolic utterance, one that goes beyond the physicality of streets to convey collective sentiments of a nation or a community. This I call *political street*, as exemplified in such terms as "Arab Street" or "Muslim street". *Political street*, then, denotes the collective sentiments, shared feelings, and public opinions of ordinary people in their day-to-day utterances and practices that are expressed broadly in public spaces- in taxis, buses, and shops, on street sidewalks, or in mass street demonstrations' (Bayat 2010: 13).

It is clear from these words that Bayat makes a shift from the physicality of the public space into the discourses of the public sphere. He emphasises the two dimensional nature of public spaces in the Middle East, being a container and shaper of conflicts on the one hand and a mirror to public opinion on the other. In that Bayat acknowledges the importance of discourses, as well as practices, in understanding the public spaces of the Middle East. This comprehensive definition of public spaces fixes some of the problems in Bayat's previous work on 'street politics' particularly his preoccupation with practices at the expense of discourses. Nevertheless, the main problem with Bayat's analysis on public spaces in the Middle East remains the same; he takes public spaces for granted. In the above quote, he argues that public spaces are spaces where contentions take place. He did not mention how these conflicts and contentions, for instance, have an impact on public spaces. He only focuses on how space serves, gives, grants and empowers the marginalised, the voiceless, the subaltern to express themselves. I deviate from Bayat in this particular point; he argues that streets are available to be used by various actors, while I argue that public spaces are being constituted and defined by the contestations between various users of

these spaces. Public spaces, I argue, should not be pre-defined even as 'available space' for everyone to use and claim, this 'availability of space' is in itself constituted.

Apart from Bayat's significant contribution on contention and public spaces in the Middle Eastern context, there were other scholars who investigated the spatial dimension of contention. Salwa Ismail (2006) developed a detailed description of contentions taking place in Bulaq al-Dakrur, a popular quarter in Cairo, in which she examines the politics of ordinary citizens who encounter the state in their everyday life and the different strategies they employ in their inevitable encounter with the state. Along the same lines, Diane Singerman (1995) maintains that the role of family and community networks in creating new 'avenues of participation' is far from being silent. Nevertheless, it is important to note that most of these Middle Eastern writings including those of Bayat⁵⁰ are primarily concerned with 'survival strategies' of ordinary people, particularly the poor, in such oppressive settings like the ones of the Middle East. They have used the notion of the public space as a tool to investigate these survival strategies. Just like mainstream contentious politics writings, they have taken the notion of the public space for granted; they have portrayed it as a useful tool for understanding the struggles of ordinary people for survival.

It becomes clear after exploring some key attempts to investigate the relationship between space and contention that most of them focus primarily on one aspect of this relationship: how spatial dynamics can help understand contention. In other words, the previous attempts used space literature in order to understand contention. They have not made a further step by using contentious politics literature to contribute to the theories of space, particularly of 'public space'. In my thesis, I am making a step in this direction, by using theories of contentious politics for a politically informed understanding of the public space. I will focus on the process through which public spaces are constituted and contested. In doing so I will focus on different episodes of contention in Egypt's post-colonial history, where the ruling regime aimed at reinforcing the public spaces that support its discourse, and which faced fierce resistance from oppositional forces that managed to formulate public spaces that resist

⁵⁰ Also see Bayat (1997b) on the strategies for survival of Cairo's poor.

the power of the ruling regime. In the following section, I will discuss the research methodology along with a brief illustration of the Egyptian post colonial history from 1952 till the 2011 revolution, showing how various political actors, most notably the ruling regime, had aimed at creating public spaces that legitimised its claim to power, and the various patterns of constituting public spaces that developed.

Research Methodology: Egypt as a Case Study

The contributions of Tilly (2000, 2003) and Sewell (2001) are particularly beneficial and touch upon important issues in examining the relation between contention and space. Nevertheless, I have shown that most of these attempts by the scholars of contentious politics use spatial analysis to offer a better understanding of political contentions and not vice versa. The primary aim of my research is to investigate the process through which public spaces are constituted, and to show how public spaces are implicated in constituting political subjectivities during moments of contentious politics.

Drawing on the work of Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2007) on '*Contentious Politics*', which builds on their earlier project in collaboration with McAdam et al. (2001) '*Dynamics of contention*', I will use the Egyptian case study to investigate the process of constituting public spaces and its manifestation during particular episodes of contention. In this section, I will illustrate my research methodology, discussing the selection of the Egyptian case study and the focus on particular episodes of contentions.

Egypt is characterised by its long history of political contentions in which 'space' plays a significant role, whether it is the street, the square, the university or the factory. The political use of various spaces, most notably the street, is a dominant characteristic of the Egyptian political landscape either historical or contemporary. The Egyptian case study reflects the spatial significance of political contentions and the contestation over the making of public spaces. In other words, it shows how the process of constituting public spaces is inseparable from contentious politics. Tilly and Tarrow (2007) define contentious politics as 'interactions in which actors make

claims bearing on someone else's interest, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties' (p.4). I argue that the process of constituting public spaces is one of contentious politics, in which political actors claim the right to constitute, define and re-define public spaces, which influence other actors' presence, power and control over these spaces. The contestation that political actors are involved in the making of public spaces defines and re-defines their political subjectivities. The Egyptian post-colonial history perfectly reflects the contentious politics and the making of Egyptian public spaces.

Background: Political Contentions over the Making of Egyptian Public Spaces

In 1952, the Egyptian political system changed from a monarchy to a republic, marking the beginning of a new reign in which the regime was portrayed as the embodiment of the people, the true representative of their interests. This shift took place when a few officers of the Egyptian army, who called themselves the Free Officers, staged a white coup against the monarchy. The Free Officers first claimed to represent the army at large, then quickly shifted to articulating a wider discourse in which they claimed to represent the Egyptian public at large, depicted as a homogenous public⁵¹. The change in the regime's representation created a new perception of public spaces, their definition, role, composition, features, functions, participants and representatives. The Free Officers found in public spaces an opportunity to materialise the legitimacy of their claim of representing Egyptian aspirations to get rid of the monarchy, feudalism, and British colonialism, particularly given the fact that they were army officers and wanted to acquire support from the Egyptian society. The populist policies of the Nasser regime were not simply a contest for the hearts and minds of Egyptians, but were meant to materialise the representative character that the new-born regime claimed for itself⁵². Enemies of the

⁵¹ See Gamal Abdul Nasser (1955), *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, Public Affairs Press. Nasser outlines how the revolution was intended to fulfil the aspirations of Egyptians. Cf. Binder's critique of the 1952 revolution's representation of the Egyptian public at large. In his book 'In a moment of enthusiasm' Binder (1978) argued that the 1952 revolution represented the rural middle class (the second stratum according to Binder) which acted as a constraint on the state and its claims to represent Egyptians. See also Ansari (1986), who argues along the same lines as Binder.

⁵² The new regime, supported by its monopoly over organised violence, started to construct public spaces that represented the regime, or reflected the claimed representativeness of the regime. They

regime were enemies of the state, and consequently of the revolution and the people.

The function of public spaces, as conceptualised by the new regime, was to protect the regime's discourse that monopolised public representation and to ensure support for the regime⁵³. The ruling regime, which controlled all institutions of the state, started to expand in the making of 'public spaces' that reflected its discourse of power and adopted various strategies to fulfil this goal. It started with nationalisation policies⁵⁴, which were made in the name of the 'public' and aimed at transforming private possessions into public property through putting them under the control of the state⁵⁵ (as the representative of the 'public'⁵⁶). Furthermore, the ruling regime adopted a mixture of populist, socialist and developmental modernist policies that broadened its constituency and supporters, and that best matched the state's discourse, for example, land reform policies and public housing. Mass education was another technique of broadening the constituency of the state in public spaces and hence confirming its representativeness. It was evident that public spaces were being constituted and re-distributed to give more weight to those that best reflected the ruling regime's representation. Opening education to the lower classes and hence giving them more presence in universities, central urban planning, modernisation policies, and the surveillance of mosques were all manifestations of the ruling regime's mission to constitute public spaces that reflected its political discourse.

Contrary to some critics' views, Nasser's era did not witness a contraction of public spaces, but rather a massive expansion of them. However, these constituted spaces were public spaces that supported the ruling regime and were seen as belonging to the

were meant to be spaces of authority. It was indeed highly valued by a regime that saw in it the space which legitimised its claims of representing Egyptians at large.

⁵³ This perception, however, raises a serious question of whether the state is the only actor that constructs and implements its own perception of the public space and legitimises its claims of representation. In reality there have always been competing representations to the state, as well as competing and resisting public spaces that are not authoritarian. Examples of these are jokes (to the extent that Nasser asked people not to mock the army after 1967), poetry, and songs. The problem with these representation practices is that they contested the state's claims of representation and hence were categorised as highly dangerous to the regime which claimed to represent all Egyptians. For a regime that claims to represent everyone it is hard to tolerate any other claims of representation because the problem with representation is that it is rendered meaningless with objections rising from the represented.

⁵⁴ Nationalisation in Arabic is *ta'mem*- turning something into a property of the *Ummah*.

⁵⁵ On the emergence of the Egyptian public sector, see Waterbury (1983), p. 57.

⁵⁶ The term public seems to be solely associated with the state, resulting in disenchantment between the term public (that is widely associated with the state) and the people.

regime. I will refer to these spaces as '*public spaces of authority*'. The ruling regime was mobilising different sectors of Egyptian society to constitute public spaces that solely reflected its discourse. Practices or discourses that were against the ruling regime were deemed dangerous and were not allowed altogether. Any activities performed by the Muslim Brothers⁵⁷ for instance, or communists were not allowed and members of these groups were crushed by the security forces⁵⁸. The Nasser regime was engaged in a process of constituting public spaces according to what I refer to as the *Monopolisation Pattern*.

The regime's continuous failures to achieve economic welfare and/or political liberation and to provide a satisfactory level of security put its discourse to represent the aspirations of 'free' Egyptians, or even the Arab public into question. Expanding the constituency of the regime, or those that it claimed to represent, was a huge burden that it could not bear. Egypt's defeat in the 1967 war against Israel represented the moment when Nasser's regime realised that it could not maintain its 'gigantic' representation discourse that monopolised the making of Egyptian public spaces. Subsequently, the ruling regime was not able to pay for the regime's claims of representation, because of the war and the diminished resources given the need for post-war rearmament and reconstruction. The gradually growing economy could no longer respond to the demands of an ever-expanding constituency composed of diverse interests. More importantly, the ruling regime's monopoly over the making of public spaces began to wane and mobilisation against the Nasser regime was rising from within the spaces that were constituted as public spaces of authority. In 1968, workers and students, who were previously mobilised by the ruling regime, were outraged by the lenient court verdicts against the Air Force commanders who were seen as responsible for the 1967 defeat. Although these protests were primarily against the court sentences, they represented a strong attack on the ruling regime, and its hegemony over public spaces. The protesters were engaging in a process of constituting what I call *public spaces of resistance*, within public spaces constituted by the ruling regime as ones of authority. The on-going protests against the regime's discourse had left the regime with no choice but to modify its discourse. This was

⁵⁷ For a full account on the formation of the Muslim Brothers and their relation with the Nasser regime, see Mitchell (1993).

⁵⁸ The Muslim Brothers were labelled '*aljama'a almahzora*' or the banned group.

clear from the state sponsored economic reform policies, particularly the 30th March 1968 reform programme, in which the regime limited its constituency significantly, confining it to the army, technocrats and the middle class (Cooper 1983: 81), and abandoned its attempts to monopolise the process of constituting public spaces.

With the death of Nasser in 1970, the nature of contentious politics in Egypt changed and the process of constituting public spaces altered. That is because ‘contentious politics varies and changes in close connection with shifts of political power’ (Tilly & Tarrow 2007: 45). Sadat, Nasser’s successor, was involved in a different set of contentious politics, with new political discourses emerging and new spatial dynamics. At the beginning of his rule, Sadat struggled to consolidate power. Political contentions were escalating within the ruling regime between Sadat and Nasser’s strong men who were trying to rule from behind the scenes. In May 1971, Sadat staged his ‘corrective revolution’ according to which he succeeded in removing his opponents from power and consolidated power. Regardless of his success in consolidating power and legitimising his rule after the 1973 war against Israel, Sadat realised that replicating Nasser’s pattern of constituting public spaces would not work for two reasons: 1) he lacked the charisma that Nasser enjoyed (Hinnebusch 1988: 50), which allowed Nasser to achieve hegemony and monopolise public spaces, 2) he witnessed the protests of 1968, which challenged the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces.

During the Sadat rule, a different pattern of constituting public spaces was developed, which I refer to as the *Marketisation Pattern*, in which the process of constituting public spaces was similar to the market. The Sadat regime opened the process of constituting public spaces to other actors⁵⁹, most notably Islamists who were suppressed and marginalised during the Nasser era, and publicly distanced itself from the struggle over public spaces. Sadat declared economic liberalisation policies known as ‘*Infitah*’, which were meant to liberalise the Egyptian economy. Although the regime formally distanced itself from the process of constituting public spaces, it aimed at controlling its outcomes. The Sadat regime sought to nurture political

⁵⁹ As Aboul Fotouh, an Islamist political activist who was heading the Students’ Union at Cairo University during the 1970s told me ‘Sadat opened the (public space) to everyone, it is just that Islamists were stronger and hence they prevailed’ (A. Fotouh 2010, Pers. Comm. April).

contentions among rival political actors over the making of public spaces, which would weaken competing political actors and would ultimately abort the making of public spaces of resistance against the ruling regime. In order to achieve this, the Sadat regime adopted a number of contradictory policies, which also reflected the making of Egyptian public spaces. During the contentions of 1972 at Cairo University, Sadat was intimidated by the Leftist students' monopoly over the space of the university, which allowed them to constitute the university into a public space of resistance. Sadat decided to break the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces that Leftist students reproduced within Cairo University. The Sadat regime did so through initiating a de-Nasserisation, in which the ruling regime encouraged 'a resurgence of the right and a reaction on the left' (Hinnebusch 1988: 69). The marketisation pattern started to take shape when the competition between leftist forces and Islamists was manifested spatially, most notably within the space of the university and the street. According to the marketisation pattern, however, no single political force should monopolise the process of constituting public spaces, and hence various processes of constituting public spaces were taking place simultaneously. While the process of Islamising Egyptian public spaces was undermining the Nasserisation of Egyptian public spaces, another process of commercialising public spaces was on the rise. Sadat maintained a distinction between public spaces and the public sphere. While the latter was saturated with promises that Infitah would bring prosperity to Egyptians, public spaces reflected the ugly face of Infitah. When the balance between the two was no longer possible, resistance erupted and was manifested in the food riots of 1977. Following the riots, Sadat faced fierce resistance from militant Islamists not only over public spaces but also over the legitimate use of violence in these public spaces as an expression of power. The confrontation eventually led to the assassination of Sadat, marking the beginning of what has endured as a hostile relationship between the ruling regime and Islamists ever since.

The Egyptian political scene under Mubarak witnessed a struggle between the ruling regime and Islamist movements, transforming the process of constituting public spaces into a security matter, which I will refer to as the *Securitisation Pattern*. Nazih Ayubi (2006) has described the rise of Islamism 'as a conquest with the state over public spaces' (p.441). He argues, however, that both the state and Islamists were hesitant to address political issues in their contest over public spaces. With the state's

focus on the economic discourse and Islamists' retaliation with moralistic discourse, the public space was emptied from political discourses. In Ayubi's words 'neither the state nor the Islamists have been willing to address politics head-on as the main concern of the public space: the state has emphasised economics and the Islamists have emphasised morals, while the distinctively "civic realm" continues to be impoverished' (Ayubi 2006: 442). In other words, not only was the ruling regime depoliticising and securitising public spaces, Islamists were also doing the same by reducing the process of constituting public spaces into mere survival. This contestation between the state and militant Islamists, which consumed Egyptian public spaces and emptied them from collective political actions, lasted until 1997 with the Luxor massacre, where 58 tourists and 4 Egyptians were killed by militant Islamists, after which the ruling regime's securitisation pattern was questioned and challenged. Both non-militant Islamists and non-Islamist social movements contested the regime's securitisation of public spaces. They have resisted the state's blockage of any political actions in public spaces. Egyptian social movements, either Islamist or non-Islamist, aimed at creating public spaces of resistance to de-securitise public spaces. This process started to intensify in 2000, following the Palestinian intifada, and kept its momentum until it managed to constitute dominant public spaces of resistance across Egypt and particularly in *Tahrir* Square, leading to the ousting of Mubarak from power in 2011.

Patterns of Constituting Public Spaces

In my thesis, I argue that public spaces are constituted through political contentions, but they also shape political contentions and constitute political subjectivities. The Egyptian post-colonial history, as briefly discussed above, reflects the dynamism between political contentions and the process of constituting public spaces. I identified three patterns of constituting public spaces while studying the Egyptian case study. These patterns are:

- The Monopolisation Pattern
- The Marketisation Pattern
- The Securitisation Pattern

By the *Monopolisation Pattern*, I mean to refer to these arrangements of constituting public spaces, in which one political actor, or more, seeks to achieve a monopoly over the process of constituting public spaces, while blocking other actors from engaging in the same process. The monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces involves hegemony over political discourses in the public sphere and monopoly over constituting public spaces to reflect and legitimise the hegemonic discourse. In the Egyptian case, as I will show in chapter three, the Nasser regime achieved hegemony over political discourses of the public sphere through banning political parties and nationalising the press, radio and television, and the movie industry. Various spaces were defined as public spaces of authority or spaces that reflect the discourse of the monopolising ruling regime, including streets, factories and universities.

On the other hand, I mean by the *Marketisation Pattern* of constituting public spaces that political actors compete over the making of public spaces according to mechanisms that are very similar to those of the market. The mechanisms of markets function according to principles of competition, supply and demand, and the survival of the fittest. Accordingly, marketising the process of constituting public spaces would mean to open it to competition among the various political actors, who may shape the supply and demand of political discourses in order to play a larger part in the making of public spaces. As manifested during the Sadat era, which will be explained in chapter four, the Sadat regime sought to undermine the Nasserisation of Egyptian public spaces, through marketising the process of constituting public spaces and weakening the monopolisation pattern. Sadat's marketisation pattern led to the Islamisation and commercialisation of Egyptian public spaces. The ruling regime had a significant role in creating a demand for Islamism and Capitalism, while curbing the supply of pro-Nasserists and Leftists' discourses.

Finally, the process of constituting public spaces could be described through the *Securitisation Pattern*, when one political actor, or more, transform the making of public spaces into a matter of security. Public spaces were considered dangerous and their political use was prohibited. Under the Mubarak regime, which will be discussed in chapter five, the securitisation pattern emerged after the assassination of Sadat at the hands of radical Islamists. In the first two decades of Mubarak's era, Egyptian public spaces witnessed a militant confrontation between the ruling regime and

militant Islamists, which resulted in a de-politicisation, and securitisation, of public spaces. The securitisation pattern was evident in Mubarak's declaration of state of emergency for 30 years and the continuous presence of security personals in spaces like streets, squares, universities and factories (previously constituted as public spaces of resistance).

It is important to note that these patterns are not exhaustive; they are only three patterns of constituting public spaces that were identified through studying political contentions in Egypt. Other patterns may be identified while studying political contentions in other case studies or at another historical juncture of Egypt's history. Nevertheless, although these patterns are associated with the Egyptian case study, they can be identified in other cases where political contentions are similar to those of Egypt. Moreover, these patterns were identified in the Egyptian case study as 'dominant patterns' and not 'the only patterns'. In other words, political contentions lead to the emergence of various patterns of constituting public spaces, with usually one or more pattern being identified as a dominant pattern. In the Egyptian case study, for instance, I identified the monopolisation pattern as a dominant pattern during the Nasser era; nevertheless, some aspects of the securitisation pattern were also present during the Nasser era. Similarly, although the marketization pattern was considered the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces during the Sadat era, some aspects of both the securitisation and the monopolisation patterns were present. Even the securitisation pattern dominant in Mubarak's Egypt incorporated aspects of the marketization and the monopolisation pattern.

Episodes of Contention

In order to understand these three patterns of constituting public spaces, I decided to focus on three episodes of contention that erupted at different historical junctures of Egypt's post-colonial history, where the contestation over the making of public spaces, and hence patterns of constituting public spaces are most evident. Tilly and Tarrow (2007) define episodes of contention as "bounded sequences of continuous interaction, usually produced by an investigator's chopping up longer streams of contention into segments for purposes of systematic observation, comparison, and explanation" (p.36). These episodes of contention are:

- The 1968 students and workers' protests against the Nasser regime,
- The 1977 food riots against the Sadat regime, and finally
- The 2011 revolution against the Mubarak regime.

In these three episodes of contention, political actors were involved in a process of defining and re-defining public spaces to legitimise their political claims. They represent moments in which forces of resistance disrupted and challenged the ruling regime's attempts to monopolise (in the case of Nasser), marketise (in the case of Sadat), and securitise (in the case of Mubarak) the process of constituting Egyptian public spaces. The contentions that erupted in 1968 came in response to the pattern of constituting public spaces developed during the Nasser regime, which I referred to as the '*Monopolisation Pattern*' in which the ruling regime sought to monopolise the process of constituting public spaces. The food riots of 1977 were directly related to a rather different pattern of constituting public spaces that was established during the Sadat regime and which I referred to as the '*Marketisation Pattern*' or more precisely the '*Infitahization Pattern*'. According to this pattern, the ruling regime opened the process of constituting public spaces to non-state actors, while supporting some actors over others. Finally, the Egyptian Revolution in 2011 also came in response to a third pattern of constituting public spaces developed under Mubarak and which I called the '*Securitisation Pattern*', where the ruling regime used the security apparatus to control the making of public spaces, reducing activities conducted in spaces like the street into mere survival. Through investigating the process of constituting public spaces in different historical moments, it becomes clear how public spaces are moving, vibrant and dynamic. It reveals how the process of defining and re-defining public spaces is continuous and never fixed. It shows the dynamism between the process of constituting public spaces and contentious politics.

These three episodes of contention, though representing different junctures in Egypt's post-colonial history, they share a number of criteria according to which they were selected:

1. They are all political episodes of contention, in which the ruling regime is a prominent actor. As Tilly & Tarrow (2007) argue, 'we enter the realm of politics when we interact with governments' (p.5). In my research, I refer to

the political authority as the '*ruling regime*', rather than the government or the state, for a number of reasons that stems from studying the Egyptian case study, but are not particular to it:

- I am referring to those who are holding political authority and are exercising power that may exist outside the formal state apparatus or government⁶⁰.
 - The ruling regime makes use of the state apparatus and the government to exercise power.
 - At times of crises, the ruling regime distances itself from the government at many occasions. This was manifested, for instance, during the food riots, when Sadat declared that he warned the government from removing subsidies without raising incomes. Also, one of Mubarak's first reactions to calm the protesters in Tahrir Square was to change the government.
 - Public rage is usually directed against the ruling regime but not necessarily against the state. The distinction between the state and the ruling regime is reiterated by Egyptian political activists⁶¹ and members of the public, stressing that although they resist the power of the ruling regime they do not seek to undermine the state. This was evident during protests in *Tahrir* Square, in which protesters raised the slogan 'the people want the regime down' (*alsha'b yurid iskat al-nizam*).
2. The contestation between the ruling regime and other oppositional actors is manifested spatially.
 3. The three episodes of contention took place on a large scale, in which they expanded beyond the initial space where the contentions started.
 4. The mobilisation level in these episodes of contention was high. Various groups that were not previously politicised joined the protests against the ruling regime⁶².

⁶⁰ As Lisa Blaydes (2011) indicates while studying the Egyptian political system under Mubarak, 'the ruling regime in Egypt refers to those individuals who "exercise power"; this includes some actors who are not part of the formal state apparatus' (p.6).

⁶¹ My interview with Hassan Nafaa, December 2010.

⁶² In the 2011 revolution, which witnessed the highest level of mobilisation, many of those that I interviewed told me that their participation in the protests was their first political action in their entire lives.

5. These contentious episodes represented a real challenge to the ruling regime, which necessitated the ruling regime's strong and immediate response.
6. The contentious episodes had effects on contentious politics and the dominant patterns of constituting public spaces. Political actors modified their political discourses, whether it was the ruling regime, or resistance forces, which undermined the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces leading to the rise of another dominant pattern.

Apart from what they have in common, the three episodes of contention reflect three different patterns of constituting public spaces and resistance against them. As Foucault (1990) rightly indicates 'where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (p.95). These episodes of contention represent moments of resistance to the dominant patterns of constituting public spaces, a resistance that is not exterior to the dominant patterns, but rather stems from within.

The protests of 1968, though triggered by the light verdicts against the Air Force leaders who were accused of negligence that led to the defeat of 1967, were primarily directed towards the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces that benefited the ruling regime at the expense of other political actors. This was manifested, as will be discussed in detail in chapter three, in the significance of occupying the university, the factory and Al-Ahram newspaper headquarters and then occupying the streets. The protesters were confirming their right to constitute, define, and control public spaces, like the ruling regime. Although they were resisting the ruling regime's monopoly over the making of public spaces, they sought to expand and monopolise the process of constituting public spaces of resistance. In other words, although they resisted the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces, they in effect replicated it.

The food riots of 1977 were triggered by the government decision to remove subsidies on essential goods, including bread, cooking oil, and sugar. Unlike the contentions of 1968, the food riots of 1977 were nationwide and more violent. The protests were resisting the marketisation of public spaces, in which the dominant principle was the 'survival of the fittest'. Egypt's poor, who were marginalised from the process of

constituting public spaces as a consequence of its marketisation, marched Egyptian streets resisting the marketisation of Egyptian public spaces, smashing hotels, shops, nightclubs, and advertisements of products that they could not afford. The protesters while resisting the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces, they were performing a manifestation of their power. In other words, their protests were also a manifestation of the marketisation pattern in which the principle ‘survival of the fittest’ prevails, as they were showing that they also are strong and can destroy the public spaces that reflect the bourgeoisie and constitute spaces that reflect them.

Finally, the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 started on 25 January, the Egyptian national police day. The protesters marched the streets while raising the slogan ‘*selmiyyah selmiyyah*’ (peaceful, peaceful). The slogan is significant in that it was meant to contest the securitisation pattern that was imposed on Egyptian public spaces, in which all demonstrations and protests were considered a threat to national security. Nevertheless, the protesters had also reproduced the securitisation pattern of constituting public spaces in Tahrir Square. They installed checkpoints at the entrances of the square. Moreover, and as a result of the ruling regime’s decision to withdraw police from all cities to cause a security crisis and chaos, Egyptians quickly developed *Legan Sha’biyyah* (popular committees), which were composed of the inhabitants of each neighbourhood and were responsible for the security of these neighbourhoods. Like in the previous episodes of contention, the protesters were also reproducing the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces.

I was confronted with a choice of whether to focus on one episode of contention or various episodes of contention. Focusing on one episode of contention allows the researcher to provide more details of the episode under investigation. Nevertheless, focusing on more than one episode of contention, though it comes at the expense of the details, gives more room for analysis and comparisons. Moreover, it enables the researcher to investigate the changes and differences between the various episodes. My decision to focus on three episodes of contention that took place at different junctures of Egypt’s post-colonial history was informed by the research aim to investigate the process of constituting public spaces. In order to investigate the dynamics between political contentions and the making of Egyptian public spaces, it was important to investigate more than one episode of contention. As illustrated

earlier, through investigating three episodes of contention, I identified three patterns of constituting public spaces, which emphasises the research argument that public spaces are always changing and never fixed.

Moreover, I decided to structure the thesis on the three patterns of constituting public spaces, rather than structuring it according to the various political actors that play a significant role in constituting public spaces. I chose the first option for two reasons: 1) my research argues that although political actors constitute public spaces, they themselves are constituted as a result of such process, 2) focusing on the pattern of constituting public spaces rather than political actors as such, allows the researcher to give more attention to the dynamics of contentions and their spatial manifestations.

The data collection was not an easy task, given the long period of time that my research investigated. Moreover, the spatial dimension of my research, which requires the researcher to have a sense of place and an understanding of the various socio-political dynamics that affect space, pushed me to use a diverse set of materials and sources. I conducted a number of interviews with political activists, politicians, journalists and eyewitnesses who participated in the events under investigation. Nevertheless, it was important to use other primary and secondary sources to verify the interviewees' statements on the events, which depended primarily on their memory. I extensively depended on archival materials. I have exerted every effort to make sure that I am balancing between the official sources, which reflect the ruling regime's interpretation of events, and those of resistance. Accordingly, I have focused on the Al-Aham archive, which although reflected the official stance of the ruling regime, has also provided detailed accounts of the episodes of contentions that I was investigating. I have also investigated the archive of the Central Committee of the Arab Socialist Union. I also researched the Nasser and Sadat archives. To balance the official materials, I researched the archive of al-Tali'a Magazine, which was a leftist monthly magazine published between 1965 and 1977. I also used the archive of al-Tagamo' Party, Egypt's leading leftist party. Moreover, I used books written in Arabic by those who played a significant role in the contentious episodes that I am investigating, which reflected a firsthand account of the events. Regarding the chapter on the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, I counted primarily on my observations and Al-Jazeera's live broadcasting of the revolution. I also counted significantly on

interviews. As will be apparent throughout my research, I have used pictures, videos, films, songs and poetry, which gave me a vivid picture of the spatial manifestations of the contentions that were taking place during the three episodes of contentions.

To summarise, in order to understand the process of constituting public spaces it is important to investigate the political contentions between the various political actors. While studying political contentions in Egypt, I identified three patterns of constituting public spaces. These patterns are: the monopolisation patters, the marketisation pattern and the securitisation patter. These patterns were most evident during three episodes of contention, which are: the 1968 protests, the 1977 food riots and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Following the approach developed by Tilly and Tarrow (2007) in their seminal book ‘Contentious Politics’ (p.27) to understand contentious processes, I will show how the various political actors were engaged in a process of constituting public spaces. This process could be summarised in the following table:

Dominant Pattern of Constituting Public Spaces	Monopolisation	Marketisation	Securitisation
Political Contentions and the Rise of the Dominat Pattern	Colonialism and Muslim Brothers Manifested in the contentions of Manshiyyah in 1954	Leftists and Nasserists Manifested in the contentions of Cairo University in 1972	Militant Islamism Manifested in Sadat’s assassination in 1981 and the establishment of the Islamic republic of Imbaba in 1992
Ruling Regime	Nasser	Sadat	Mubarak
Effects and Manifestations of the Dominant Pattern	1) Hegemony over the public sphere, nationalising press, radio, television	1) Opening the process of constituting public spaces 2) Survival	1) Prohibiting all sorts of political activities in public spaces 2) Declaring

	and cinema 2) Reshaping public spaces to reflect the discourse of the ruling regime	of the fittest, 3) Controlling supply and demand of political discourses in public sphere 4) De-Nasserisation, Islamisation and commercialisation	state of emergency for 30 years 3) Police dominant presence in public spaces 4) Torture and harassment taking place in public spaces, transforming them into dangerous spaces 5) Expansion of gated communities
Spatial Manifestations of the Dominant Pattern	<p><u>Spatial Routines:</u> Public spaces were used politically only to support the ruling regime, turning them into 'public spaces of authority'. Anti-regime activities were not permitted.</p> <p><u>Spatial Agency:</u> The process of monopolising public spaces created subjects that complied with the ruling regime's</p>	<p><u>Spatial Routines:</u> Economic and consumerist activities dominated the process of constituting public spaces, making it difficult for political activities to take place in them.</p> <p><u>Spatial Agency:</u> The process of marketising public spaces constituted consumerist subjects that reinforced the</p>	<p><u>Spatial Routines:</u> Public spaces were transformed into spaces for mere survival, in which political activities are considered a threat to national security and public spaces are only used for survival.</p> <p><u>Spatial Agency:</u> Dangerous public spaces constituted subjects that only sought survival, reinforcing the securitisation</p>

	discourse and supported it even during moments of crisis.	consumerism of public spaces. It also sought to produce apolitical religious subjects.	pattern.
Episodes of Contention and Resistance	1968 protests	1977 food riots	2011 Egyptian Revolution

Table (1): Summarising Political Contentions and the Dominant Patterns of constituting Egyptian public spaces

In the following chapters, I will illustrate the three patterns of constituting Egyptian public spaces, which I identified after investigating three episodes of contentions that took place at three different junctures of Egypt's post-colonial history. In chapter three, I will discuss the monopolisation pattern, which developed under the Nasser regime. In chapter four, I will discuss the marketisation pattern under the Sadat regime. Finally, in chapter five, I will illustrate the securitisation pattern of constituting public spaces under the Mubarak regime. I divide the three chapters into three main sections: 1) Political contentions and the rise of the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces, 2) Effects and manifestations of the dominant pattern on the making of Egyptian public spaces and 3) Resistance within the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces (episodes of contentions).

Chapter 3:

The Monopolisation Pattern and the Making of Egyptian Public Spaces under Nasser

Nasser is in Our House... Nasser is Everywhere!

In my parents' house in Cairo, my father has kept a small ceramic white statue of Nasser, which he bought more than 40 years ago. The presence of the statue in our house has given it a political identity that is hard to differentiate from President Nasser and what he represented. The statue had defined our house as being *Nasseri* (pro-Nasser), setting inclusionary and exclusionary guidelines on what was permissible in the space of the house, and what was not. The space, now defined as pro-Nasser, created identities and subjectivities on the inhabitants of the house (me and my family), linking us to Nasser and his discourse. At one point, we were seen as revolutionaries, for believing in Nasser's discourse of anti-colonialism, nationalism, social equality and pan-Arabism. In another instance, we were considered weak, submissive and servile, for not being able to stand against Nasser's authoritarianism and despotism. Contentious discourses started to surface, with the space of the house being portrayed as one of resistance and one of authority at the same time. The position of the statue had changed accordingly. At times, the statue retained its obvious position in the house, while in different instances it was covered with dust and removed to an unnoticeable place. The same process took place beyond our house. During the fifties and the sixties of the last century, the streets and squares of Egypt were filled with Egyptians raising the portraits of Nasser, defining these streets and those present in them as *Nasseri*. In other words, they were defined as public spaces of authority, reflecting the discourse of Nasser's political authority. Newspapers, literature, movies, radio and television later on, were all meant to spread Nasser's discourse and hence expand and enhance Nasser's monopoly over the

making of Egyptian public spaces. With the decline of Nasserism⁶³, the portrait of Nasser disappeared and the same streets were filled with protestors against the Nasser regime. Such public spaces were no longer associated with the Nasser regime, they were rather against it.

The contentions in our house and in Egyptian streets reflect the dynamism between the symbolic, the discursive, the spatial and the constitution of political subjectivities. The relations between Nasser's statue/portrait, the discourses of Nasserism, the space of the house, Egyptian streets and squares, and contentions over defining them, reflect broader dynamism between political discourses of the public sphere and the making of Egyptian public spaces under the Nasser era⁶⁴. Moreover, they reveal the monopoly of the Nasser regime over the making of Egyptian public spaces.

In this chapter, I will show the dynamism between the political discourses in the Egyptian public sphere under the Nasser regime and the making of Egyptian public spaces. I will show how the contentions between discourses of resistance and authority had defined and re-defined Egyptian public spaces. I argue that the Nasser regime sought to monopolise the process of constituting public spaces, blocking other actors from taking a part in this process and achieving hegemony over the public sphere. I refer to this pattern of constituting public spaces that developed under the Nasser regime as the monopolisation pattern⁶⁵. I argue that regardless of the Nasser regime's efforts, resistance against the ruling regime hegemony was on the rise, and was most evident during the 1968 protests against the Nasser regime, which were primarily against the monopolisation pattern. I will show, however, that although

⁶³ Nasserism refers to the discourse that Nasser stood for and represented. It was a mixture of anti-imperialism, Arab-Nationalism, populism, and social and economic equality. For a comprehensive illustration of Nasserism see (Podeh and Winckler 2004).

⁶⁴ In chapter one, I investigated the link between the public sphere and the making of public spaces. I argued that in order to understand the process through which public spaces are constituted, it is important to investigate the dynamism between the public sphere, where political discourses are formulated, and public spaces, which are constituted because of the contestations between the various political discourses and the physical spaces. In other words, I use the term public sphere, to refer to the realm where political discourses are formulated and are meant to influence public opinion, while public spaces are constituted by competing political actors to reflect their political discourses.

⁶⁵ The monopolisation pattern was discussed in the methodology section in chapter two.

these protests were against the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces, they reproduced many of its features⁶⁶.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I discuss political contentions and the rise of the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces. I will particularly focus on the incident of *al-Manshiyyah*, which reflects political contentions at the beginning of Nasser's rule and the development of the monopolisation pattern. Second, I will discuss the main features, manifestations and effects of the monopolisation pattern on the public sphere and the re-shaping of physical spaces, creating public spaces of authority. This will be done through focusing on the Nasser regime's hegemony over political discourses of the public sphere, as well as the hegemony over the making of public spaces, constituting public spaces of authority that solely reflect the discourse of the ruling regime. Third, I will discuss the resistance against the Nasser regime and the monopolisation pattern, which was manifested during the episode of contention that erupted in 1968. I will focus on the 1968 students and workers' protests against the Nasser regime, in which discourses of power and resistance struggle over the making of public spaces. In this episode of contention, the process through which dominant public spaces of authority formulated under Nasser were challenged, and the process of constituting public spaces of resistance retained more visibility and power. Although these protests represent a moment of resistance to the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces, they have reproduced the monopolisation pattern.

I will show empirically how public spaces of resistance were being constituted during the 1968 contentious episode following the same monopolisation pattern that developed during the Nasser era. I will first focus on the first wave of contention that erupted in *Helwan* aircraft factory in February 1968 to challenge the light verdicts against the Air Force leaders who were convicted of negligence during the 1967 Six-Day War. The workers' new discourse of resistance clashed with the ruling regime's discourse of authority, which resulted in struggles and contestation over the making of the physical space of the factory and the surrounding streets into public spaces. The confrontation between discourses of resistance and authority spread all over Egypt,

⁶⁶ As discussed in the methodology section in chapter two, this confirms Foucault's (1990) argument that resistance is interior to power.

marking the transformations in the making of Egyptian public spaces. The second wave of contentions took place in November 1968 and only nine months after the first wave of contentions, started in the Delta city of *Mansoura* against a new educational act sponsored by the government. Secondary schools and the surrounding streets of *Mansoura* were re-defined as public spaces of resistance. The impact of the discourse of resistance of *Mansoura* spread out to reach the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, where the space of the university was also monopolised by the students and constituted as a public space of resistance.

Through detailed illustration of both waves of contention, I will show how political actors are involved in the process of making and re-making public spaces. I will also show the changing nature, characteristics and meanings of the various physical spaces of the factory, the school, the university, *Al-Ahram* headquarters and the street. In this contentious episode, discourses of resistance clashed with discourses of authority defining these spaces as public spaces of resistance. It is interesting to see how the process of constituting public spaces of authority and resistance reinforced the dominant monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces.

Political Contentions and the Rise of the Monopolisation Pattern

Manshiyyah Square and the Manifestations of Political Contentions

“Everyone should stay in his place... And if Gamal Abdel Nasser should die, each of you shall be Gamal Abdel Nasser”

Nasser’s words following the assassination attempt on his life in *Manshiyyah* Square, Alexandria in 1954

The period between 1952 and 1954 witnessed a fierce power struggle between General Mohamed Naguib, whom Nasser asked to lead the Free Officers’ movement and who became Egypt’s first president (Dekmejian 1971; Vatikiotis 1978; Beattie 1994). The Muslim Brothers supported Naguib against Nasser, splitting political discourses in the public sphere into discourses of ‘modernisation’ and discourses of

‘backwardness’⁶⁷. The confrontation between Nasser and the Muslim Brothers was spatially manifested, and it was best pictured in what became known as the *Manshiyyah* incident⁶⁸.

The incident of *Manshiyyah* refers to the assassination attempt on Nasser’s life by a member of the Muslim Brotherhood⁶⁹ in 1954 while he was giving a speech in *Manshiyyah* Square in Alexandria to celebrate British withdrawal from Egypt. The incident reflects the dynamism between political contention and public spaces leading to the development of the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces. Before the interruption of his speech by gunshots, Nasser was recalling the relevance of the *Manshiyyah* Square to the struggle against British colonialism. He recalled the protests that took place in the Square in 1930 against British Colonial rule in Egypt, which young Nasser participated in. Nasser revealed that his participation in such protests was his first encounter with colonial authority. He said ‘I started my struggle (against colonialism) from this *midan* (*Manshiyyah* Square), in 1930 I took to the streets as a young man with fellow Alexandrians calling for freedom and pride for the first time in my life, and this was my brothers, where I started my struggle, in this *midan*’⁷⁰ (Nasser 1954).

Nasser was referring to the contentions between colonial authority and resistance to it, which transformed *Manshiyyah* Square into a public space of resistance against colonial powers. The recurrence of resistance discourses and practices against British colonialism had created what I called earlier ‘repertoire of public spaces’⁷¹ in which

⁶⁷ These terms modernisation and backwardness were used by Nasser in various speeches. Nasser used these two terms not only to differentiate his own discourse from that of the Muslim Brothers, but ‘forces of backwardness’ became a term used to describe all oppositional groups to Nasser, including Communists (who flourished in the struggle against colonialism prior to Nasser’s rise to power), Liberals (who were engaged in the political system before the fall of the monarchy) and Capitalists (who opposed Nasser’s socialist measures).

⁶⁸ For detailed information on the *Manshiyyah* incident see Abdel Rahman El-Raf’ei ‘s (1987).

⁶⁹ Members of the Muslim Brotherhood have denied their involvement in the assassination attempt on Nasser’s life and argued that the whole incident was a mere theatrical performance fabricated by Nasser to strengthen his powers and ‘destroy the Muslim Brotherhood’ (My interview with an unnamed leading figure of the Muslim Brotherhood July 2010). They referred to Nasser’s decision to dissolve the Muslim Brotherhood and the massive campaign against its members, including the arrest and execution of many as proof of Nasser’s intentions.

⁷⁰ He repeated the word *Midan* or the square (referring to *Manshiyyah* Square) nine times in his speech.

⁷¹ An adaptation of Tilly and Tarrow (2007)’s ‘Repertoire of Contention’, in which I argued that the repetition of certain practices and performances in certain spaces creates ‘repertoires of public space’,

Manshiyyah Square had been defined as a public space of resistance to British colonialism, becoming available for discourses and practices of resistance⁷². Nasser's selection of the same square to deliver his speech to celebrate the end of British colonialism was a confirmation of the repertoire of *Manshiyyah* Square. This repertoire of public space reflected the agency that the square had preserved. The square retained the power to allow particular contentions, particular discourses and practices, while prohibiting others. Nevertheless, the contentious politics that surrounded the Muslim Brotherhood's assassination attempt on Nasser's life had interrupted the 'repertoire of public space' that *Manshiyyah* Square retained, opening the square for resistance discourses and practices that were not against colonialism but were rather against Nasser. The assassination attempt failed and the transformation of *Manshiyyah* Square into a public space against Nasser had also failed. Nasser's first reaction to the attempt was to firmly order his supporters to 'stay in (their) places' informing them that he had not died. Nasser then uttered his historic statement 'if Gamal Abdel Nasser should die, each of you shall be Gamal Abdel Nasser' (Nasser 1954).

Nasser's words were significant for that they reflected the centrality of Nasser to the discourse of authority and the making of public spaces of authority. These words revealed the importance of Nasser, his charisma and subsequently his portrait in the making of public spaces of authority, their expansion, and the Nasser regime's hegemony over them. The portrait of Nasser, in particular, became an important tool in the making of public spaces of authority; a tool which he might have borrowed from the Soviet Union which had also experienced a 'Stalinisation' of Russian public spaces⁷³. Nasser's insistence that his supporters retain their positions in *Manshiyyah* Square regardless of the assassination attempt reflected his ability not only to abort the transformation of *Manshiyyah* Square into a public space of resistance against his rule, but also to transform *Manshiyyah* Square into a public space of authority that

in other words they define public spaces, their functions, and the set of practices and discourses that are accepted and possible within these spaces. The repertoire of public spaces is similar to Sewell's 'spatial routines' which was discussed in chapter two.

⁷² While discussing the relation between space and contentious politics, Charles Tilly (2003) mentioned that 'Routine political life... endows different places and spatial routines ... with symbolic significance, which is then available for adoption, parody, or transmutation by participants in transgressive politics' (p.139).

⁷³ On the centrality of Stalin's portrait see Jan Plamper's (2012) book on Stalin's cult.

reflected his own discourse. Nasser ordered his followers to incorporate and internalise his own personality in the struggle over *Manshiyyah* Square, something that reflects the monopolisation over public spaces Nasser was trying to achieve through his own personal traits and charisma. The contentions between the Muslim Brothers and Nasser had changed the political significance of *Manshiyyah* Square, confirming what Tilly (2000) mentioned on how ‘contention itself transforms the political significance of particular sites and spatial routines’ (p.139).

The incident of *Manshiyyah* has shown the changing characteristics of the public space of the square. The contentions between British colonialism and anti-colonial forces had defined the square as a public space of resistance, inspiring revolutionaries and developing their identities, like the young Nasser who expressed his gratitude to *Manshiyyah* Square and decided to deliver his speech to celebrate the end of British colonialism from it. The public space of *Manshiyyah* was constituted through political contentions, and at the same time, it contributed to the constitution of Nasser’s anti-colonial discourse. This perfectly shows the dynamism between contention, space, and identities, that Massey (2006) highlights by arguing that ‘space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations... identities/entities, the relations ‘between’ them, and the spatiality which is part of them, are all constitutive’ (p.10). The process was repeated with the political contentions between Nasser and the Muslim Brothers, which resulted in the making of *Manshiyyah* Square as a public space of authority, reflecting Nasser’s power. The *Manshiyyah* incident reflects the confrontations that were taking place at the beginning of Nasser’s rule and which consequently led to the making of Egyptian public spaces according to the monopolisation pattern, particularly with British colonialism and the Muslim Brothers⁷⁴. The square of *Manshiyyah* had also played an important role in the making of pro-Nasser subjects, not only within the square but also in spaces beyond *Manshiyyah*, thanks to Nasser’s control over the media of the public sphere: radio⁷⁵,

⁷⁴ According to Nasser, the Muslim Brothers wanted to monopolise Egyptian public life. He narrated a story in one of his speeches in a public square on how the supreme leader of the Muslim Brothers (the *murshid*), before the confrontation between them over power started, asked Nasser to impose the wearing of headscarves (*hijab*) on Egyptian women. Nasser refused and told him that while he cannot force his daughter to wear the hijab he wanted Nasser to force 10 million women to wear it. Nasser was juxtaposing himself versus the Muslim Brothers who were trying to achieve hegemony over Egyptian public space, while Nasser did not.

⁷⁵ Tawfiq al-Hakim, a prominent novelist, wrote a short story that was published in *Akhbar al-Youm* in November 1954 called ‘My Blood is your Blood’. The story is of a husband and a wife who were

newspapers, magazines, and also literature, songs and movies. In the following section, I will discuss the features, effects and manifestations of the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces. I will start with the Nasser regime hegemony over the public sphere, where political discourses are formulated to shape public opinion. I will then focus on the spatial manifestation of the monopolisation pattern and the making of Egyptian public spaces. In the last section, I will discuss the resistance to the monopolisation pattern.

Effects and Manifestations of the Monopolisation Pattern

Hegemony Over the Public Sphere: Discursive Monopoly

Nasser realised the importance of controlling the media of the public sphere well before the *Manshiyyah* incident. Nasser's claim to represent the Egyptian public at large as a base for legitimacy made the task of controlling the Egyptian public sphere, where public opinion could be formed, essential. In his book, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, Nasser mentioned that when the Free Officers ousted King Farouk, they waited for the Egyptian public to join them and lead the revolution, yet Nasser expressed his frustration that the masses that he saw were fragmented⁷⁶ (Nasser 1956: 42-43). He returned this to foreign intervention and colonialism as well as the political struggle between political parties that were primarily governed by personal interests (Ibid: 71-77). Nasser regretted the absence of a 'strong unified public opinion' (Ibid: 78), and hence it became his chief goal to unify Egyptians and create a unified Egyptian public opinion. In other words, Nasser's attempt to monopolise the public sphere developed in reaction to the political contentions that preceded the revolution and led to the fragmentation of Egyptian public opinion. Like Habermas (1989), Nasser aimed at forming an ideal public sphere, where homogenous public actively engage in public debates and reach consensus. He was against any sort of antagonism in the public sphere, which might break the unity and consensus of the

listening to live broadcasting of Nasser's speech in Manshiyyah. The couple were electrified when they heard the gunshots and Nasser's subsequent speech, in which they hurt themselves sub-consciously without realising that they were bleeding. After Nasser finished his speech by saying 'my blood is your blood', the couple realised that they were bleeding and repeated Nasser's words. The story was meant to enhance Nasser's monopoly over the public sphere.

⁷⁶ He referred to the revolution's slogan being: Discipline, Unity, and Labor, being a response to such fragmentation (Nasser 1956: 43).

public sphere (Contra Mouffe 1993, 2005). Like Habermas, he challenged the commodification of the press, which fragmented the public sphere. Unlike Habermas, however, Nasser was not nostalgic for the bourgeoisie public sphere, which was exclusionary. For Nasser, the Egyptian bourgeoisie public sphere was only open for the rich and the educated, and hence it excluded the majority of the Egyptian people.

Accordingly, Nasser did not aim for the formulation of an ideal bourgeoisie public sphere in Egypt, but could rather be seen as formulating a ‘populist⁷⁷’ public sphere, that was inclusionary rather than exclusionary, although it was exclusionary in its own terms⁷⁸. As a statesman, Nasser was able to take decisions to shape the Egyptian public sphere⁷⁹, as a means to formulate a unified Egyptian public opinion against colonialism⁸⁰. In doing so, *Sawt al-‘Arab* (the voice of the Arabs)⁸¹ radio station was established in 1953⁸². Faced with a high level of illiteracy within the society, the radio represented a perfect media for the formulation of a populist public sphere that was meant to be inclusionary. *Sawt al-‘Arab* was particularly interesting in that it did not only aim at formulating a unified Egyptian public sphere, but rather an Arab public sphere which was an early example of what Nancy Fraser (2007) has called ‘transnational public sphere’. Songs were also used by Nasser to formulate a unified Egyptian/Arab public sphere, where anti-imperialist discourses were hegemonic. Since the 1952 revolution until Nasser’s death in 1970, more than 1200 songs for the

⁷⁷ Many scholars have considered Nasser’s discourse ‘(Nasserism)’ a form of populism (see (Podeh and Winckler 2004). I am more sympathetic to Ernesto Laclau’s (2007) conception of populism, according to which he considers populism as a ‘political logic’, which ‘proceeds out of social demands and is, in that sense, inherent to any process of social change’ (p.117). Laclau confirms that populist regimes reflect ‘democratic demands’ and not ‘democratic regimes’, which may reflect the demands of the majority of the public.

⁷⁸ Nasser’s public sphere was also exclusionary to those who disagreed with his discourse. The Nasser regime resorted to the *mukhabarat* (Egypt’s intelligence) to ensure that any resistance or disagreement with the ruling regime discourse was curbed. Torture and the use of violent means, particularly against Islamists, were used to keep their resistance silent. As I argued in chapter one, inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms are always present in public spheres.

⁷⁹ Nasser (1956) argued that Egypt should catch up with European development and it should do this quickly. This justifies Nasser’s persistence in creating a unified public opinion using a top-down approach.

⁸⁰ It is important to note, however, that none of these techniques were particularly unique to Nasser. Various regimes in China, Latin America, and Russia had developed similar techniques to control public spheres and hence maintain their power and crush opposition.

⁸¹ For a comprehensive study on the development of *Sawt al-‘Arab* see: Boyd, Douglas (1975).

⁸² The Voice of the Arabs had a significant role in arousing nationalist sentiments and endorsing liberation forces against colonialism. It has significantly contributed to the formulation of a unified Arab public sphere. The Voice of Arabs’ efforts were not welcomed by the Western world and were seen as mere ‘propaganda campaigns’. See for instance Life Magazine’s piece on The Voice of Arabs, which was titled ‘Aggression by Radio to Wrap Arab Minds’, 25 Aug. 1958 p.p. 22-23.

revolution were released⁸³, with Abdel Halim Hafez and Umm Kulthom, legendary Egyptian singers, becoming symbols for the revolution. Poetry was another area where Nasser triumphed, with the 'Egyptian colloquial' poetry of Salah Jaheen being reiterated in newspapers, songs and movies⁸⁴.

Cinema and the movie industry were also considered important media to shape public opinion and formulate Nasser's 'unified' public sphere. In 1957, Nasser ordered the establishment of the 'Organization of Consolidation of Cinema' and the Higher Institute of Cinema in 1959 (Samak 1977: 12), which reflected the attention the Nasser regime paid to art and culture as important tools in shaping and homogenising Egyptian, and also Arab, public opinion⁸⁵. Nasser's support for the cinema industry was multi-faceted. First, it enhanced his grip over the Egyptian public sphere. Second, it made movies available for the majority of Egyptians, before it had only been open to the bourgeoisie and foreigners, and hence it expanded the Egyptian public sphere, and third, it helped spread Nasser's discourse, while depicting him as a saviour of the Arab people. For instance, In Youssef Chahine's 1963 movie 'Salah al-Din', the legendary Islamic hero Salah al-Din was depicted as an Arab socialist, regardless of the fact that he was of Kurdish ancestry (Azzam 2009: 2).

Nasser's approach towards the press, as an important medium of the public sphere, was relatively different. He blamed the press for being a tool in the hands of the monarch and feudal forces before the 1952 revolution, which was used to fragment Egyptian public opinion in order to weaken the Egyptian public and hence strengthen the monarchy, feudalism and subsequently British colonialism. Accordingly, Nasser's approach towards the press was a mixture of censorship, surveillance, discipline, and manipulation, and finally nationalisation of the press in 1960⁸⁶, turning the ownership of various publishing houses, most notably *Al-Ahram*, to state ownership. *Al-Ahram*, with its famous editor-in-chief *Heikal*, played a pivotal role in shaping Egyptian

⁸³ For a complete list of revolutionary songs during Nasser's era, visit Nasser's Archive on Bibliotheca Alexandrina. <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Songs/SongsMain.aspx?CS=1&x=7&lang=ar>

⁸⁴ For an overview of Nasser's support for cultural activities see Farag, Alfred; Taher, Bahaa; El-Qa'eed, Youssef & Farahat, Gumaa (2006), which offers personal accounts on the support that Nasser had given to literature, music, theatre, and caricature.

⁸⁵ Nasser also made television broadcasting available in Egypt in 1960.

⁸⁶ On the relation between Nasser and the press, see Dabous 1993 and Hassan, Karima (2008). The relation between Nasser and the press, will also be discussed later in the chapter, while discussing the importance of *Al-Ahram*.

public opinion with regard to domestic as well as foreign issues, only reflecting the discourses of the Nasser regime, depicting critics of the Nasser regime as being ‘enemies of the revolution’. As an Egyptian judge, who served under the Nasser regime, put it ‘Nasser aimed at nationalizing political contention’⁸⁷. For that Nasser was intolerant of the rise of counter-publics, whom he considered ‘enemies of the Egyptian public’ because of their disruption of the unity of the Egyptian public sphere, which he sought to create. In other words, Nasser was seeking to achieve monopoly over the Egyptian public sphere. Nasser’s hegemony over the media of the public sphere was manifested spatially, which will be discussed in the following section.

Remaking Public Spaces: Spatial Monopoly

Public Spaces were burnt, Long Live Nasser’s Public Spaces!

It is important to note that such hegemony over Egyptian public sphere was made simultaneously with the re-making of Egyptian public spaces. As David Harvey (2006) emphasises, while our encounters with urban public space influence how we act politically, the political ideas that we adopt have a significant impact on the way we understand public spaces. In showing the link between the public sphere and the public space, Harvey investigated the public spaces of the Parisian Second Empire and the political implications of its restructuring. He particularly tried to capture the political implications of Haussmann designs of Parisian boulevards and streets, which were meant to privilege the bourgeois and protect their private property.

An analysis of Cairene public spaces⁸⁸ before the 1952 revolution could benefit from Harvey’s analysis on the Parisian public spaces during the Second Empire. Ironically, Haussmann designed the boulevards and streets of downtown Cairo during the reign of Khedive Ismail in the second half of the 19th Century, a period that was widely known in the literature as the ‘Haussmannization of Cairo’ (Abu-Lughod 1971, Mitchell 1988).

⁸⁷ The quote was attained from an unnamed Judge, Pers. Comm. July 2010.

⁸⁸ I mean the Public Spaces of Cairo.

Harvey shows how public spaces of Paris, after the establishment of the second Empire, reflected the new political discourses of the ruling elite, which aimed at protecting the bourgeois, their property and lifestyle, and hence it was important to design public spaces, particularly the boulevards in a way that would block the workers and the poor, being a threat to the bourgeois, from accessing these public spaces. Moreover, public spaces were meant to masquerade the huge gaps between classes by turning the boulevards into a 'spectacle' that is shiny and glamorous, making the appearance of the poor in such public spaces unwelcomed. Public spaces, accordingly, became spaces for consumption; they turned into de-politicised spaces where political activities could hardly be anticipated. There is little evidence that Khedive Ismail was influenced by the same political discourse when he asked Haussmann to re-plan downtown Cairo. Ismail was rather enchanted with Paris and had found in Haussmann's designs a perfect model for the 'beautification of the city' (Al-Sayyed 2011: 206). Nevertheless, with British occupation in Egypt in 1882 and foreign intervention in everyday life, the streets and the boulevards of downtown Cairo reflected the colonial life style.

The colonial shaping of Egyptian public spaces did not prevent resistance against colonialism which managed to transform Egyptian streets and boulevards into public spaces of resistance against colonial rule⁸⁹, most notably during the 1919 revolution⁹⁰ and the burning of Cairo in 1952⁹¹. The burning of Cairo was particularly important in understanding the contestation between political discourses before 1952 revolution and their spatial manifestations. The burning of Cairo⁹² took place on 26 January 1952 after a fierce confrontation between Egyptian police and British soldiers in Ismailia. The Egyptian police fought to protect the building of *Ismailia* Governorate, a fight which resulted in the death of 70 from the Egyptian police and 40 British soldiers (Hamrush 1983: 168). Egyptians marched the streets of Cairo in a massive demonstration against British colonialism, which developed into burning what were considered symbols of British colonialism. According to Hamrush (1983), the

⁸⁹ There were various occasions in which Egyptian anti-colonial forces publicly demonstrated and protested against colonial rule: 1930 (which Nasser participated in) and 1946 (students' and workers protests violent clashes with British soldiers).

⁹⁰ Nasser (1956) argued that the 1919 revolution against British colonialism had failed because of the antagonism among its leaders (p.51).

⁹¹ See Hamrush (1983) on the burning of Cairo.

⁹² It is also known as 'Cairo Fire'.

demonstration reached a new phase when burning was rather systematic. It started with the burning of the Rivoly Cinema, then the Metro Cinema, then the British club '*el-Taraf*'. The fire had reached major shops and hotels leading to 'the burning of 300 shops, the Shepard Hotel, Politian Metro, and tens of other bars, car expos as well as Barclay's Bank, making downtown Cairo look like a torch of flame' (p.170). The burning of Cairo was not only a protest against colonialism and the spaces that reflected colonial discourse, but also a demand for their destruction⁹³; a demand that Nasser answered without hesitation.

One of the first decisions taken by Nasser and the new ruling junta in 1952 was to change the names of key streets and squares in Egypt, most notably the infamous *Tahrir* Square, which was called *Al-Ismailia* Square after Khedive Ismail (Rodenbeck 1998: 170), and *Al-Gomhoriyyah* Square, which was called '*Abdeen* Square after '*Abdeen* monarchial palace. Nasser delivered his key speeches from populated squares, most notably *Al-Gomhoriyyah* Square in Cairo and *Al-Manshiyyah* Square in Alexandria. The renaming of the streets and squares was the first step in the re-making of Egyptian public spaces to reflect the new discourse of the ruling regime, a discourse which presented itself as being anti-colonial, pan-Arabist, modernising and a guardian of social equality (Nasser 1956).

To reflect the regime's anti-colonial discourse, the British army barracks in downtown Cairo were abolished, soon to be replaced by the headquarters of the Arab League, an Egyptian bureaucratic building (*al-Mogama'*) which reflected the power of the regime, and a Hilton Hotel, where foreign leaders stayed to witness Egyptian anti-colonial public spaces (Rodenbeck 1998: 171, Ibrahim 1984: 27). Moreover, Nasser used the \$3 million offered to him by the US as a 'personal gift' to build Cairo Tower, the tallest building in Africa and the Arab world during the fifties and sixties (Copeland 1970)⁹⁴. The building of Cairo Tower in *Gizera*, which was known for its foreign expat inhabitants, was meant to undermine colonial public spaces and reflect Nasser's anti-colonial discourse. The modernising aspect of Nasser's regime discourse was also manifested spatially. The expansion of industrialisation cities, in

⁹³ The London riots of 2011 could be considered a modern replication of the Cairo Fire, with variations in contention.

⁹⁴ Nasser built the tower to stand as a symbol of Egyptian pride, nationalism and anti-imperialism.

Helwan and Shubra al-Khaymah, public housing and the paving of Egypt's streets⁹⁵, were all reflections of Nasser's modernisation and developmental discourse⁹⁶ (Abu-Lughod 1971: 160-163).

Nasser's discourse on social equality developed into a fully-fledged socialist discourse⁹⁷, which became a generating force in the re-making of Egyptian public spaces. As Muhammad Hammad, an Egyptian architect during the Nasser era, stated 'Socialism has guided the architecture style that combines both solid massing and efficient standardization to achieve social justice' (quoted in Al-Sayyad 2011: 247). Nasser directed his attention to Cairo, the city, which had reflected and strengthened colonial power and social inequalities. Nasser seemed to despise the duality of Cairo created by colonial powers, where foreigners and the rich inhabited the best districts of Cairo (clean, organised and bright), while the poor occupied the gloomy and miserable suburbs of Cairo. Such duality was not unique to Cairo, but was a defining characteristic to all colonial cities (Fanon 1963). Moreover, Cairo was not open to all Egyptians; it was primarily open to foreigners and aristocrats, excluding the majority of the Egyptian people. As Rodenbeck (1998) illustrates, 'Nasser had opened the Cairo of aristocrats and cosmopolitans to the common people' (p.176). Immigration to Cairo and other urban cities had increased significantly from 3.8 million in 1927 to 12.1 million in 1966, i.e. the percentage of urban population to the total population had increased from 29.8% in 1927 to 40.38% in 1966⁹⁸ (Abdel Hakim & Abdel Hamid 1982: 2)⁹⁹.

⁹⁵ Street pavements and sidewalks are considered important in Egypt, an expression of how public spaces are becoming more accessible. During Mubarak's era and as a result of the traffic problems and the increasing numbers of cars, the sidewalks have almost disappeared in Egypt. They were used by cars for parking, or used by street vendors to sell their products. This created a sense of nostalgia towards an earlier period where there was a space for people to walk. It also represented the authority of the state and its ability to organise public spaces.

⁹⁶ Nasser appointed 'Abdel Latif el-Baghdadi' in 1956 as the Minister of public work and infrastructure, who initiated major public space projects that were meant to reflect the modernization and discipline discourse of the regime. (See Al-Sayyad 2011: 242).

⁹⁷ Egypt was officially considered a socialist state with the issuance of Socialist Decrees in 1961 and the National Charter in 1962. Nevertheless, Nasser's belief in social equality had been a dominant theme in his speeches since 23 July 1952. See (Ginat 1997: 12-21)

⁹⁸ Urbanisation was neither unique to Cairo nor to Nasser's era. It was rather a dominant characteristic of post-colonial cities. In this respect, urbanisation reflected the dominant post-colonial discourse initiated by Nasser.

⁹⁹ Abdel Hakim, M. S. and Abdel Hamid, Wassim Abdel (1982), argued that urbanisation is one of the most obvious characteristics of most developing countries in the post-WWII era. The reason for this is 'pressure of population upon limited agricultural resources on the one hand and government support for

Like other Socialist counties at the time, Nasser provided public housing for a rising urban population (Al-Sayyad 2011: 247), which was modelled after the ‘Khrushchev Blocks’ (El-Sharky 2006: 84-85), and which reflected the influence of Nasser’s alliance with the USSR on the shaping of Egyptian public spaces. Nasser’s expansion of low-income public housing had transformed the Egyptian spatial landscape, and re-defined Egyptian public spaces. Ibrahim Pasha Street in downtown Cairo, for instance, was renamed as *Al-Gomhoriyyah* (republic) Street. The street was renowned for splitting Cairo into a city for the rich and a city for the poor, yet after the 1952 revolution that prioritised social equality, the street lost its classist symbolism and was rather re-defined to reflect the discourse of the ruling regime (Rodenbeck 1998: 176, Al-Sayyad 2011: 249).

Nasser’s aim was to open Cairo and other urban centres to the less privileged, more precisely to the workers and peasants who were at the centre of Nasser’s discourse. Nasser could be seen as a champion of ‘the right to the city’, something that Lefebvre (1996) and Harvey (2008) would have welcomed. Nevertheless, Nasser’s ‘right to the city’ was to privilege ordinary Egyptians at the expense of foreigners and expats, who left Cairo after the revolution. Nasser’s attempt to open the city gave an example of how the ‘right to the city’ is always inclusionary *and* exclusionary, not as Lefebvre (1996) and Harvey (2008) argued when describing an ideal city whose public spaces are open to everyone. The right to the city, and its public spaces, is defined through political contentions and hence it involves a process of inclusion and exclusion, which is always changing. The re-planning of the city and its opening to the less privileged would make it first, reflect the discourse of the Nasser regime, and second, accessible to Nasser’s supporters who had filled the streets of Cairo and Alexandria in support of their leader, defining such spaces politically as public spaces of authority.

The dynamism between Nasser’s discourse and the Egyptian public spaces, particularly urban streets, suggests that Nasser was not merely ‘using’ public spaces, but was rather engaged in a process of re-making and constituting public spaces in order to achieve legitimacy. To claim that the Nasser regime was ‘using’ public

industrialization on the other’ (p.1). The process of urbanisation in Egypt kept increasing as in 1976, urban population reached 12.1 million (43.9% of the total population).

spaces is to argue that public spaces are waiting for someone to use them. Asef Bayat (1997) made the same argument when he suggested that the ‘street’ retains particular characteristics that make it available for political forces to be used¹⁰⁰. But as it became clear, Nasser did not accept the spatiality that reflected the power of colonialism, he re-defined Egyptian public spaces to reflect the discourse of the ruling regime.

In the previous chapters, I have shown how the idealisation of both notions of the public sphere and the public space, defining them as autonomous spaces that are open to everyone, hindered critical discussions of the public space¹⁰¹. Moreover, this idealisation limited political analysis of public space to processes of democratic transition¹⁰². Accordingly, the emergence of the public space was seen as either a prerequisite for achieving democracy, or a product of the democratic process itself. Claude Lefort (1988) for instance argues that ‘the survival and extension of the public space is a political question... (a) question that lies at the heart of democracy’. The strong bond between the notion of the public space and democracy made conceptualising ‘the’ public space under non-democratic regimes sound like an oxymoron. As I argued earlier, however, public spaces are constituted through contentions between various political actors, including ruling regimes. Given that contentions take place under both democratic¹⁰³ and non-democratic regimes, the process of constituting public spaces also takes place under various regimes regardless of the political system¹⁰⁴ that is in place. Ruling regimes are engaged in a process not only of using and controlling public spaces but also of defining and constituting public spaces. To argue that ruling regimes use and control public spaces

¹⁰⁰ Asef Bayat’s analysis of ‘Street Politics’ was discussed in detail in chapter two of the thesis.

¹⁰¹ In chapters one and two of the thesis I have contested such definition of public space, arguing that we should abandon such an ideal, rigid, overarching definition and rather focus on the process of constructing public space(s).

¹⁰² See for instance John Parkinson’s (2012) latest book in which he stressed the importance of the physical public space for democratic politics. Even the literature of the public space in non-Western societies, like those of Latin America or the Middle East has analysed the evolution of public spaces as a prerequisite for democratic transition. See for instance Leonardo (2002) on public spaces and democracy in Latin America.

¹⁰³ On the importance of antagonism and contentions for democratic politics see Chantal Mouffe (1993, 2005).

¹⁰⁴ Defining a political system as being democratic, authoritarian or totalitarian is itself a contested process. Arendt mapped out the characteristics of totalitarian regimes like Nazism and Stalinism, differentiating them from authoritarian regimes (Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*). In recent studies, scholars have argued that most regimes are best called ‘hybrid regimes’ where they retain both democratic and authoritarian characteristics at the same time. See for instance Diamond (2002).

as such is to deny any sort of agency public spaces have. In the previous sections, I have shown how the Nasser regime was engaged in a process of re-defining public spaces, which by no mean is particular to the Nasser regime or to Egypt.

In Jan Plamper's (2012) book *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power*, he shows how in Soviet Russia Stalin had saturated Soviet public spaces with portraits of Stalin. Not only portraits, but also posters and statues were all tools used by the Stalin regime to constitute public spaces of authority in Russia¹⁰⁵. Along the same lines, Lisa Wedeen (1999) has also discussed the making of Syrian spaces into spectacles in her book *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. With portraits and posters of Hafez el-Assad, his mother and sons, Syrian streets were turned into public spaces of authority, limiting activities and discourses in these public spaces to supporting the ruling regime. It is important to note, however, that through the use of portraits, posters, parades, and rallies, ruling regimes were engaged in a process of defining public spaces, rather than merely using public spaces. The installation of huge portraits and statues of political leaders in the streets was meant to disrupt the meaning of such spaces from being spaces of everyday life into being political contentious spaces. Moreover, public spaces of authority gained agency, producing subjects that internalised the discourse of the ruling regime¹⁰⁶.

In the following section, I will discuss the making of the spaces of the factory, the university and the school into public spaces of authority under the Nasser regime, which reflect the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces. It is important to note that Nasser did not present his discourse as one of authority or power, rather he saw himself, his discourse and accordingly the re-defining of public spaces as being revolutionary. Nasser's public spaces were ones of resistance to colonialism and social inequalities, nevertheless, such public spaces were also ones of authority, reflecting Nasser's hegemonic discourse, aborting all forms of resistance and opposition, and strengthening Nasser's legitimacy and grip on power. As Nasser's

¹⁰⁵ Also see Dobrenko and Naiman (2003).

¹⁰⁶ Public spaces of resistance were also constituted simultaneously, which was partially a reaction to such constitution of public spaces. It started in private homes by removing the portrait of the leader. ... Khrushchev started the de-Stalinisation process in order to re-define public spaces of authority, not linking them to the man but rather to the ideology (portraits were replaced by flags of the USSR... etc.).

discourse became more authoritative than revolutionary, resistance to Nasser's discourse started to surface, gaining more visibility and re-making public spaces constituted by the Nasser regime.

I will focus on the manifestations of the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces on spaces other than the street and the square to challenge the tendency in most public space literature to equate between public spaces and streets, giving the impression that public spaces do not exist outside the space of the street and the square. I will discuss Nasser's attempt to expand public spaces of authority beyond the street and the squares, to the universities, schools and factories, to legitimate his discourse, and which reflect the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces.

Factories, Universities and Schools: Public Spaces of Authority in the Making

As Nasser mentioned on various occasions, the officers' movement of July 1952, which put an end to the monarchical system and brought the military junta to power, suffered from a major problem; 'it was not based on a popular organisation but rather on few officers' (Nasser 1965-1967, quoted in Shokr 1993: 23). Accordingly, the lack of popular organisation through which the military junta could acquire legitimacy and support, had pushed the Nasser regime to establish various political institutions to remedy such a problem. The Nasser regime established the Liberation Rally in 1953, the National Union in 1956 and finally the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) in 1962, which came to fill the political vacuum caused by the abolition of all political parties (See Vatikiotis 1978; Beattie 1994). Nevertheless, these political organisations facilitated the relationship between the new rulers and the people. The Nasser regime needed people's support to be visible. The most visible and hence strategic space that would grant Nasser an unprecedented support and which would deliver the ruling regime's discourse to countless Egyptians was the street¹⁰⁷.

In the previous sections, I discussed the dynamism between Nasser's discourse and the making of Egyptian streets into public spaces. I have particularly focused on the

¹⁰⁷ Nasser's experience with the street came with the Free Officers' movement on 23rd July 1952, when thousands of Egyptian poured into the streets of Egypt to support the officers' movement and their role in abolishing the monarchical system and colonial presence.

city, the streets and squares. Nevertheless, the streets were not the only spaces that Nasser attempted to constitute as public spaces. The construction of factories, universities, and schools swelled under the Nasser regime, which accommodated a large portion of the Egyptian population which were marginalised under the *ancien regime*. The expansion of these spaces was not free from political mobilisation¹⁰⁸.

Nasser's focus on the school, the university and the factory in particular was not haphazard or random. Nasser seemed to have realised the importance of the spaces of the university and the factory for strengthening his discourse, given the 'spatial repertoire' such spaces had gained as being contentious spaces that challenge discourses of power. The spaces of the factory and university, with their identified boundaries, distinct identity and contentious discourses, constitute political subjectivities. These spaces confer workers and students with a political identity that turns them into being active participants in protests against repression, exploitation, and authoritarianism, not only in Egypt but also worldwide. Spaces of universities and factories had been transformed into public spaces of resistance in various instances, whether to protest the state's participation in a war or to rally against inequalities within the society; they had gained 'spatial repertoire' as being contentious spaces¹⁰⁹.

In Egypt, the development of 'spatial repertoire' for the spaces of the factory and the university was slow and can be traced back to the construction of modern factories and universities in Egypt during the colonial period. The construction of 'Egyptian' universities and factories was meant to enhance the anti-colonial discourse, and produce 'anti-colonial' subjects¹¹⁰. Female school students were protesting against British

¹⁰⁸ Assef Bayat (1993) argued that populist regimes' mobilisation empowers large sects of population yet they fail to offer a sustained system for such empowerment. Bayat's focus on civil society and democratic ideals made him ignore the relevance of such mobilisation for the creation of public spaces.

¹⁰⁹ Conflicting discourses between competing classes (in the factory) and diverse generations (in the university) made them fertile soil for contentious politics. It is important to note, however, that the space of the factory and the space of the university should not be taken for granted as contentious spaces in and of themselves. Rather, the contestation between competing discourses within such spaces over a long period of time led to the development of 'spatial repertoire', which could be changed. The recent 'Occupy Wall Street' movement is a manifestation of how contentious spaces changed from the factory and the university to 'Wall Street', the financial district in New York, which became a symbol of American capitalism. Discourses of resistance to exploitation moved from the factory to 'Wall Street', creating a new 'spatial repertoire'.

¹¹⁰ The demand to construct the first Egyptian university came in 1908 with the development of the Egyptian national movement, something that the British commissioner disagreed to. The first Egyptian

colonialism, after the closure of their school had been ordered because Arabic was the language of instruction (Jabri 2013: 35-6). During British colonialism, Egyptian students and workers were in the front lines of the demonstrations against British colonialism, most notably in the 1946 protests¹¹¹. Nasser introduced his discourse as one of resistance and hence he did not see contradictions between his discourse and the discourses of resistance that dominated spaces of the factory and the university. The ruling regime capitalised on the discourses of the resistance circulating within such spaces, yet through promoting the ruling regime's discourses only, guaranteeing the loyalty of its inhabitants and turning these spaces into public spaces of authority. This came after fierce confrontation with political actors who were against the ruling junta, and consecutive episodes of contentions, particularly in the period between 1952 and 1954 (Vatikiotis 1978; Beattie 1994).

The Nasser regime adopted a mixture of populist, socialist and developmental modernist policies to hegemonise political discourses within schools, universities and factories, in order to re-make such spaces as public spaces of authority, which best reflected the regime's discourse. Schools and universities were considered of strategic importance to the ruling regime's discourse and hence Nasser worked hard to mobilise its youth. Mass education policies were considered a step in this direction. There was an increase in the number of youngsters enrolled in education of all kinds from 1,900,000 in 1953/4 to 4,500,000 in 1956/7 (Owen 2000: 30)¹¹². Equally important is the spatial expansion of schools and universities, as the 'the student/population ratio rose from 71 state school pupils per 1,000 inhabitants in 1952/53 to 102 in 1958/59, and from 1.95 to 3.07 university students per 1,000 inhabitants in the same period' (Abdallah 1985: 101)¹¹³. Nasser's policies of mass education¹¹⁴ guaranteed access to schools and universities for marginalised students

factory was built after the establishment of Bank Misr by Talaat Harb, and also to undermine colonial discourse. On the history of an Egyptian factory, see Carson, W.M. (1957).

¹¹¹ Nasser himself participated in protests against British colonialism in Egypt while he was a school student in Alexandria.

¹¹² Membership of the institutions of Egyptian public spaces, university, workers syndicates, professional association and so on was not voluntary, but rather compulsory (Owen 2000, p.32).

¹¹³ Abdalla (1985) mentions how such expansion in education was criticised for being 'quantitative expansion' rather than 'qualitative expansion' (p.104). This confirms the significance of granting access to more students in order to transform schools and universities into public spaces of authority.

¹¹⁴ On criticising Egyptian educational system during Nasser, see Ammar, Hamed; 'Edid, William & Badran, Shebl (2006).

who sympathised with the regime's discourse, and hence made use of their presence within such spaces by transforming them into public spaces of authority.

Nasser believed that the space of the university belonged to the ruling regime and it could not be considered an independent autonomous entity under any circumstances. He argued that 'if we say that the university is autonomous... then there is no need for the ministry of Higher Education, nor for the Minister of Higher Education... moreover, the parliament will not be able to discuss any issue that is related to the university because there is no representative from the university in the executive branch and hence the parliament will not be able to direct any questions regarding the development of the university because the university is independent from the government and the state...' ¹¹⁵(Nasser 1965- 1967, quoted in Shokr 1993: 68). Nasser explains the reason why he thinks the university should not be autonomous: 'the socialist state is responsible for everything... the university may be considered autonomous if it was run by private funds, but the truth is that the state funds universities and oversees it' (ibid: 68). The schools and universities were meant to reflect the modernist and developmental discourse of the regime, not only discursively, through changing the curriculum and adding political subjects like 'Arab Rhetoric' and 'Arab Nationalism' (Abdalla 1985: 116-117), but also physically. Nasser invested in modernising and improving the buildings of schools and universities¹¹⁶. Various schools and universities were renamed to match with the regime's new discourse. Similar to the renaming of various streets and squares, The English School in Heliopolis became Horiyyah (Liberty) School, and King Fouad University became Cairo University, regardless of the fact that it is located in Giza¹¹⁷.

The efforts of the Nasser regime to re-define spaces in order to reflect and reinforces its monopoly over the process of constituting public spaces and his claim to power, were made in parallel to consolidating a popular discourse to mobilise those outside the spaces of the street, the school and the university, most notably the workers and

¹¹⁵ Nasser made exactly the same point with regard to the factory, arguing that the 'socialist state' is responsible for the budget of every factory and hence the factory could not be free.

¹¹⁶ Ahmed Bahaa Shabaan informed me that he spent his first year in university in the Faculty of Engineering in Assuit University, in Upper Egypt. He made a comparison between the modern and clean buildings of the University of Assuit which were built under Nasser, and Egyptian universities in Cairo under Mubarak, which became dirty, weary and old-fashioned. My interview, April 2012.

¹¹⁷ This reflects the dynamism between the discourse of the ruling regime and physical spaces.

the peasants¹¹⁸. The centrality of workers and peasants in Nasser's discourse was materialised in a number of policies and projects that aimed at giving them more visibility and presence in order to enhance the political discourse of the ruling regime and legitimate it, something which was a defining characteristic of populist regimes that lacked legal legitimacy, like the regimes of Latin America and the USSR. For the peasants (*alfalaheen*), the ruling regime issued the agrarian reform law on 11th September 1952¹¹⁹, according to which the possession of agrarian lands was limited to 200 feddans¹²⁰. The regime confiscated lands from landowners and redistributed it to the peasants, giving more visibility to the marginalised peasants who were loyal to the regime's discourse. For the workers (*al'omal*), the other important component of Nasser's discourse, their relationship with the Nasser regime was in flux. According to Posusney (1997), the relationship between workers and the Nasser regime could be divided into three stages: 1952-1955 (confrontation between the regime and workers), 1955-1961 (the beginning of Nasser's developmental projects), and 1961-1970 (the regime's increased commitment to workers' welfare, without allowing them to be autonomous) (p. 40-41)¹²¹.

These stages could also be seen as reflecting the development in the ruling regime's efforts to transform the space of the factory into a public space of authority. The first stage started with the free officers' movement in 1952, where the Nasser regime was working hard to consolidate its power and hence the demands of the workers were not given any attention and were rather harshly repressed¹²². In this stage the discourse of the ruling regime was not clear and hence it was not able to constitute public spaces of authority that reflected such incoherent discourse. Alternatively, the ruling regime

¹¹⁸ Workers and peasants were particularly marginalised in the monarchical system that the free officers had removed from power.

¹¹⁹ The first agrarian reform law was issued on 11 September 1952, (The full illustrative note of the agrarian reform law drafted by the Minister of Finance was published on Al-Ahram 12 Sept. 1953: p.4).

¹²⁰ The agrarian reform was amended in 1958 and then again in 1961, adding more restrictions on individual ownership of agrarian land. For agricultural reform and nationalisation policies see Waterbury (1983), The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat.

¹²¹ Posusney stressed that the lines of demarcation between the stages are not strict ones. Indeed, these stages are useful in providing the general tendency of the regime's relation with workers but should be taken with caution, as the relationship between the workers and the ruling regime was in flux in each of these stages.

¹²² The most famous deadly confrontation between the ruling regime and the workers took place in *Kafr el-Dawar* in August 1952, less than a month after the free officers came to power (See Al-Ahram 14 August 1952: 1).

blocked the constitution of public spaces of resistance within the space of the factory or the streets. The best example of the regime's tough measures to block the transformation of the factory into a public space of resistance, which came only 20 days from the free officers' movement that brought them to power, took place in *Kafr el-Dawar*, particularly in the textile factories of *Misr* Spinning and Weaving Company. The police and the military used harsh measures to curb the uprising, ending the confrontation with the execution of two workers (*Baqary* and *Khamis*) after a quick military tribunal (Benin & Lockman 1987: 421-42). This incident gave a strong message to the workers that any attempt to re-define the factory into a public space of resistance space that challenged the power of the new military junta would be met by force.

In the second stage, which started in 1955 with Nasser's consolidation of power, he decided to expand the spaces of the factories, turning Egypt into an industrial state. Nasser appointed Aziz Sedki¹²³ as a Minister of Industry in 1956. Regardless of the economic importance of building an industrial sector in Egypt, the construction of factories had a political importance for the Nasser regime and its discourse. The expansion of building factories and providing housing for the workers minutes away from their work, in what became industrial cities, was meant to mobilise and empower the workers and guarantee their loyalty to the ruling regime's discourse¹²⁴. Nasser was drawing on other socialist regimes of the time, particularly the Soviet Union, which provided Egypt with technical and material support in the building of factories and workers' housing¹²⁵.

In the third stage, which started with the declaration of the 'Socialist Decrees' in July 1961, the space of the factory was given special attention. According to these decrees, many factories were nationalised, turning their ownership over to the state. Nationalisation policies were not unique to the Nasser regime, however, and did not automatically lead to the constitution of public spaces of authority, and the production of consenting subjects. It was rather a process that started with the nationalisation

¹²³ Aziz Sedki received his PhD in urban planning from Harvard University with a thesis on how Egypt could be an industrial state.

¹²⁴ It is important to note, however, that the relationship between the workers and the ruling regime was not always positive, as stated earlier.

¹²⁵ See Al-Sayyad 2011: 247.

policies, but included a set of discourses, practices and performances orchestrated by the ruling regime within the space of the factory to create a 'repertoire of public spaces' that would make them linked to the ruling regime, and enhance the regime's monopolisation of the process of constituting public spaces. These included the frequent visits Nasser made to the factories and the important speeches he delivered from there. Moreover, the picture of Nasser was a defining characteristic of all factories, while his words were placed on the walls of the factories. Additionally, the workers, their rights and demands occupied the central position in Nasser's speeches, while emphasising the importance of improving the working conditions for workers and doubling their wages (Posusney 1997: 69-70)¹²⁶.

Following the 'Socialist Decrees', Nasser declared the National Charter (Nasser 1962)¹²⁷ from Cairo University in a long speech¹²⁸, during which he read the whole charter that was later published as a booklet of 123 pages long¹²⁹. According to the National Charter, the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) was established as the only political organisation in the country, opening its membership to everyone¹³⁰. Nasser argued that the ASU combined 'popular and political tasks, that's why we consider the ASU to encompass the whole country' (Nasser quoted in Shokr 1993: 18). The ASU was dispersed spatially in almost each and every village and city in Egypt, and it became a destination for angry protestors in the contentions of 1968. Moreover, and in order to maintain permanently defined the spaces of the school, the university, the factory and hence the street as public spaces of authority that reflect the discourse of the ruling regime, Nasser had also ordered the establishment of the Socialist Youth Organisation (SYO) in 1963, which represented the youth wing for the ASU, and provided the youth with political education which enhanced their understanding of the regime's discourse (Shokr 2004)¹³¹. Apart from the official SYO, the secret Vanguard

¹²⁶ According to Abdel-Fadil (1980), the wages declined immensely in 1965, undermining the relationship between the ruling regime and workers (p.33).

¹²⁷ Regardless of the fact that Nasser declared Egypt a socialist state, many critics argued that Nasser was rather offering a new economic model, which they called 'State Capitalism' (Waterbury)

¹²⁸ The launching of the Charter from Cairo University reflected the importance of the university as a public space of authority, through which the discourse of the ruling regime was being propagated.

¹²⁹ For the full text of the National Charter see Nasser's speech from Cairo University on 21 May 1962. Available online: <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1015&lang=ar>

¹³⁰ For the membership of the ASU, particularly the workers and peasants, see (Binder 1978: 309-325).

¹³¹ Abdel Ghafar Shokr (2004) offers a detailed analysis of the Socialist Youth Organisation (SYO) (*Monazamet al-shabab al-ishteraky*) from 1963-1976. Shokr himself was a prominent member of the organisation.

organisation (*al-Tanzeem al-Tali'i*) was also initiated to secretly report any anti-regime discourses¹³².

As the discourse of the ruling regime became stronger and more dispersed in various spaces of the university, school, factory and street, the ruling regime's efforts in turning these spaces into public spaces of authority were accelerated. Moreover, these spaces were seen as belonging to the ruling regime and hence maintaining order and security within them became of utmost importance. The security of these constituted public spaces was equivalent to the security of the regime and that of the state. And hence, practices or discourses that were against the regime were deemed dangerous and were not allowed or prohibited altogether. Any activities carried out by the Muslim Brothers, for instance, or communists, were not allowed and the members of these groups were crushed by the security forces and were not allowed access or visibility in public spaces¹³³. The contestation over constituting Egyptian public spaces was fierce between Nasser and the Muslim brothers, seeing that both were seeking to monopolise the process of constituting public spaces. For Nasser and the Muslim Brothers, the confrontation over Egyptian public spaces was a win-lose game, which was manifested in the violent confrontation between both of them. Regardless of their importance in posing a threat to Nasser's regime and its hegemony over public spaces, resistance that challenged the Nasser regime and the monopolisation pattern came from within. In the following section, I will discuss resistance to the monopolisation pattern, which was manifested in the 1968 protests. I argue that although this resistance sought to challenge the monopolisation pattern, it used its mechanisms.

Resistance within the Monopolisation Pattern: The 1968 Protests

A Farewell to Nasser's Hegemony?

With the regime's continuous failures to achieve economic welfare and/or political liberation and to provide a satisfactory level of security put its discourse to represent

¹³² For further details on the Vanguard Organisation see Hamada Hossny (2008).

¹³³ The Muslim Brothers were labelled '*al-jama'a almahzora*' or the banned group.

the aspirations of 'free' Egyptians, or even the Arab public into question. Expanding the reach of the regime's discourse to a large constituency became a huge burden that the regime was not able to maintain. The heavy defeat of the Six-Day War in 1967 represented the moment when Nasser's regime realised that it could not maintain this 'gigantic' discourse that claimed to represent everyone and needed to be materialised everywhere. Subsequently, the ruling regime was not able to pay for such discourse, which became weak, because of the war and the diminished resources given the need for post-war rearmament and reconstruction. The gradually growing economy could no longer respond to the demands of an ever-expanding constituency composed of diverse interests.

The ruling regime's discourse that maintained a continuous process of constituting public spaces of authority waned and its control over the Egyptian public sphere declined. Literature, poetry and movies became critical to the Nasser regime. Naguib Mahfouz wrote his acclaimed novel *Tharthara fawq al-nil* 'Adrift on the Nile' in 1966, which revealed the corruption in Egyptian bureaucracy under Nasser through a story of an Egyptian bureaucrat who spent nights with other fellow Egyptians on a boat in the Nile with the aim of forgetting the corruption and hypocrisy of Egyptian everyday life. Along the same lines, Tawfiq al-Hakim published his short story *Bank al-Qalaq* 'The Anxiety Bank' in 1966, in which he tried to reflect the worry and anxiety that became dominant in the Egyptian society during the 60s. Poetry and music was another outlet for dissent during the Nasser regime. The Egyptian colloquial poetry of Ahmed Fouad Negm coupled with the music of Sheikh Imam created a counter public sphere to the Nasser controlled one. With the defeat of 1967, counter discourses gained ground, and the songs of Negm and Imam gained publicity particularly among students and workers¹³⁴.

While using the songs of Negm and Sheikh Imam in the background, Youssef Chahine captured the decline of Nasser's discourse and the defeat of 1967 in his expressive movie *al-'Osfour* (The Sparrow) produced in 1972¹³⁵. The movie

¹³⁴ The songs of Imam-Negm had a huge impact on various generations. Their songs became prominent in uprisings against Egypt ruling regimes; in the student uprising of February and November 1968, the student protests of 1972, the food riots in 1977, and the Egyptian Revolution of 2011.

¹³⁵ For further discussions on Youssef Chahine's movies and their relation with the Arab Nationalist project see (Khouri 2010).

discussed corruption in an Egyptian state-owned factory, and the attempts of a young journalist, with the assistance of a policeman, to reveal government officials' involvement in such a scandal. The movie was contextualised, however, within Nasser's anti-imperialist discourse and the military's preparations for possible aggression from Israel. When Israel did attack the Egyptian army, *Sawt al-'Arab* declared the Egyptian military victorious. Chahine captured the illusionary victory propagated by the radio, with a scene of Egyptian crowds sitting in a *baladi* café cheering happily after listening to the radio announcer declaring the success of Egyptian aircrafts in shooting down more than fifty Israeli aircrafts. The master scene of the movie, however, was the last one, which captured Egyptians' reaction to the defeat announcement by Nasser and his subsequent resignation. The plot was portrayed with a smaller crowd watching Nasser's address to the nation on television. As they listen, one of the audience members sobs while saying 'it seems we have been defeated without even knowing'. Other audience members were shocked, and froze in their places. Only one mother in her forties called *Baheyya*, said 'No... No...'. She ran into the street while chanting 'No... No... Never... We will fight', where other fellow Egyptians were also marching in the streets to refute Nasser's resignation. In this last scene, Chahine was depicting what came to be known as the 'people of the 9 and 10 of June', referring to spontaneous Egyptians who took to the streets to refute Nasser's resignation and express their determination to fight. See Figure (1).



Figure (1): Egyptians filling the streets following Nasser's resignation on the 9 and 10 June 1967. (Source: Alfikr al-Qawmi al-Arabi¹³⁶)

The scene of Egyptians filling the streets to support the defeated president and pressure him to continue the fight was bewildering. How was it possible for the masses to support a defeated president? Some claimed that the protests were orchestrated by the ruling regime itself, yet given the rapid widespread nature of the protests, along with the regime's weakness at the time, it was hard to imagine that such massive protests were planned (Abu Ghazi 2011).

I argue that there is another explanation, which is embedded in the spatiality of Egyptian streets. I have discussed earlier how Nasser transformed the spaces of the Egyptian streets into public spaces of authority. The recurrence of practices that support such transformation, or what Tilly (2008) called 'contentious public performances', like the spread of Nasser's portrait in the streets, Nasser's public

¹³⁶ From the website of Al-Fikr al-Qawmi al-Arabi, available online: <http://www.alfikralarabi.org/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=5048> (Last accessed 07/09/2010).

speeches in streets and squares and large billboards with pro-Nasser statements, all led to the formulation of a repertoire of public spaces, which gave the space of the street agency. So regardless of the gravity of the defeat and the shock that all Egyptians suffered, once they filled the streets, they could only chant for Nasser. The public spaces constituted by Nasser gained agency, and it defined those who were present in them and constituted consenting subjects. Although Egyptians were devastated by the defeat of 1967 and media manipulation, public spaces of authority inspired them to repeat the same practices that were familiar to the streets, i.e. to chant for Nasser.

Nevertheless, change was on the way when counter discourses started to gain strength. The songs of Sheikh Imam and Negm gained currency and dominated the Egyptian political scene¹³⁷; political jokes against the Nasser regime were on the rise (Hamouda 1999) to the extent that Nasser declared that ‘no voice should rise over the voice of the battle’, in an attempt to curb the strength of the counter public sphere of resistance. However, discourses of resistance started to spread between students, intellectuals and workers who were trying to understand how and why such a defeat was possible. Criticisms of the Nasser regime and the ASU became dominant. ‘Contentious public performances’ against the Nasser regime continued, and in November 1968 they developed into anti-Nasser performances, and not only against his regime. The portrait of Nasser disappeared from the streets, the factories and the universities, and such spaces no longer produced subjects that would support Nasser. Rather, they created a generation of anti-regime political activists, which had a significant role in Egyptian politics, particularly during the 1970s, and became known as ‘*geel al-sab’eenat*’ (the generation of the Seventies).

In the following section, I will discuss the contentious events of February and November 1968, and the process through which public spaces of resistance were constituted. In both instances, discourses of resistance to the Nasser regime were on the rise gradually, seeking to make use of the public spaces constituted by the ruling regime to express their rage. In doing so resistance forces were re-defining the spaces of the factory, the university, the school and the street, from being used to support the

¹³⁷ For further information on the songs of Sheikh Imam and Negm and their impact on the Egyptian political scene following the 1967 defeat see Booth (2009).

ruling regime into being used to resist its discourses. This was possible through undermining the discourses and practices of the ruling regime by offering alternative discourses and practices within these spaces, and hence re-defining them as public spaces of resistance.

Political Contention and the Re-making of Egyptian Public Spaces: Factory, University, School and Street¹³⁸

David Caute (1988) called the groundbreaking year of 1968 ‘the year of the barricades’, in which blockades and barriers were put in public spaces to prevent the flow and the continuation of the riots. Nevertheless, Caute’s book, as well as the books of many commentators who wrote on the riots of 1968 (Kaiser 1997; Kurlansky 2005; Kaufman 2009), were Western-centric; they primarily focused on the riots that swept the US and Europe without paying attention to events taking place in the Arab world, particularly in Egypt.

In 1968, Egypt witnessed unprecedented protests against the Nasser regime, in which the monopoly of Nasser over Egyptian public spaces was challenged. The protests of February 1968, which were initiated by workers¹³⁹ and students, who were mobilised to support the ruling regime previously, were triggered by the lenient verdicts against the Air Force commanders that were portrayed publicly as responsible for the defeat. They soon turned against the political, economic and social discourses of the Nasser regime. The on-going protests against the ruling regime’s discourse had left the regime with no choice but to modify its discourse to be more consistent in order to keep public spaces calm; the ruling regime had to contract its constituency severely. This was clear from the state sponsored economic reform policies, particularly the 30 March 1968 reform programme, in which the ruling regime limited its constituency significantly, confining it to the army, technocrats and the middle class (Cooper 1983: 81).

¹³⁸ In the following sections, I depend primarily on the archive of Al-Ahram, and first hand accounts of the events, collected through interviews and books (in Arabic) by those who led the demonstrations.

¹³⁹ The protests started with Helwan workers primarily.

Gradually, the state lost the public spaces it had once constructed and through which it had previously legitimised its discourse. The fall of the regime's discourse that led to the making of public spaces of authority had opened the door for oppositional groups to make use of the public spaces that were controlled by the ruling regime's discourse. This was very clear in the second wave of the protests of November 1968, leaving no other choice to the ruling regime but to use violence to abort the making of public spaces of resistance.

The political contentions that erupted in Egypt in 1968 were unprecedented in the Egyptian political landscape for various reasons. Since their success in altering the Egyptian political system from a monarchy to a republic, Egypt's ruling junta had never encountered such a massive wave of protests, both in terms of scale and intensity as they did with the protests of February and November 1968. It was the first time since Nasser became president in 1954 that thousands of students and workers, joined by others, marched in the streets to express their rage against the Nasser regime.

The factory, the university, and the street were all spaces that had long chanted for Nasser and his revolutionary speeches and decisions. As Foucault (1990) noted, 'where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (p.95). Accordingly, while Nasser was working hard to constitute public spaces of authority, he was at the same time enabling and constituting the making of public spaces of authority. In 1968, discourses of resistance were becoming louder within Nasser's public spaces of authority. They compelled Nasser to alter his discourses and allow new practices to be performed in these mutually constituted public spaces. But how was it possible for these spaces that had reflected Nasser's power and authority, permitting only his discourses and practices, to turn into spaces that resisted his rule and questioned it, offering alternative discourses and practices and granting them exceptional visibility?

In the following sections, I will analyse the contentions that took place in Egypt in February and November 1968, showing the spatial meaningfulness of these contentions and how these contentions resulted in the making of public spaces of

resistance within the spaces of the factory, the university, the school and the street. I will also show how although this episode of contention reflected resistance towards the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces, protesters reproduced the same pattern in constituting public spaces of resistance, through using many of the mechanisms used by the ruling regime to constitute public spaces of authority.

February 1968: Cairo

On 20 February 1968, the Egyptian Supreme Military Court issued its long awaited verdicts against the Air Force leaders during the Six-Day War who were put on trial for their military negligence that led to the devastating defeat of 5 June 1967. On 21 February, the verdicts were published in Egypt's leading newspapers. The main villain in the case, Air Marshal Mohamed Sedky Mahmoud, was only sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment, while his deputy Air Marshal Ismail Labib received ten years in prison. The commander-in-chief of the Air Force, Air Marshal Gamal Afifi, and Air Marshal Hamed al Dogheidy were acquitted (Al-Ahram 21 February 1968; Heikal 2010; Cook 2012). The verdicts were disappointing for the majority of Egyptians, who were being exposed to state-sponsored propaganda following the defeat that placed all the blame for the defeat on the Air Force commanders and their negligence. Accordingly, the verdicts came as a slap in the face for many Egyptians, who thought that the verdicts were incompatible with the gravity of the defeat, and Egyptians' mounting distrust in the ruling regime, its discourses and its theatrical practices, including these trials and its monopolisation performances had reached a point of no return.

The legitimacy of the ruling regime was at stake. The strength of the ruling regime's discourse of authority and its monopolisation over the making of public spaces started to wane. It was significant how the spaces that had long embodied the ruling regime's discourse of authority and power were being the first spaces to witness massive protests against the regime itself, which constituted them and mobilised its participants. During the contentious events that took place in February 1968, particular spaces emerged as contentious public spaces, and had undergone a process of re-constitution and re-definition; this included the factory, the university, the street

and also *Al-Ahram* headquarters¹⁴⁰. These spaces shared one thing in common; they were all defined by the ruling regime as public spaces of authority that reflected the regime's discourse.

In the following sections, I will show how public spaces were constituted, re-defined and contested during contentious moments of February 1968, and how political actors played a significant role in doing so. I will particularly focus on spaces of the factory, university, street and *Al-Ahram* headquarters, all of which were defined by the ruling regime as public spaces that allowed for political participation among members of the public, even though this participation was only in support of the ruling regime. I will show how political actors had managed to redefine these spaces and constitute alternative public spaces of resistance by gaining visibility for their resistance discourses and performing resistance activities. I will do so through investigating the competing discourses and practices that took place in February and November 1968. This will show how political actors constituted public spaces during contentious moments and hence will show that public spaces are temporal, contested, and should not be taken for granted nor pre-defined.

THE FACTORY/ THE STREET

During the contentions of February 1968, the public space of the factory¹⁴¹ experienced a process of constitution, re-structuring, re-definition and contestation. As mentioned earlier, before the protests of 1968, the factory was redefined as a public space of authority that supported Nasser's regime.

¹⁴⁰ *Al-Ahram* newspaper was Egypt's leading newspaper, which expressed the ruling regime's discourse. It reflected the hegemony of the ruling regime over the Egyptian public sphere. *Al-Ahram* headquarters was targeted by students and workers during the protests of 1968 and was constituted into a public space of resistance, as will be explained later.

¹⁴¹ If one uses a Marxist analysis to understand the space of the factory, then it would be considered as a contentious space in and of itself, because of the structural conflict between workers and owners. Nevertheless, as I argued earlier, spaces are not contentious in and of themselves, rather, the repetition of particular contentious performances within a particular space grants it 'spatial repertoires' that are contentious. This becomes clearer with the Occupy Wall Street movement, where the common spaces of contention, being the factory and the university, shifted to Wall Street because of a change in the nature of political contentions.

The destruction of the Egyptian Air Force during the 1967 war was dramatic, costing Egypt, along with its Arab allies¹⁴², a devastating defeat in the war and the occupation of Sinai, the Gaza Strip, Eastern and Western Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. Egyptians were shocked by the gravity of the defeat, especially given that the state-sponsored media were propagating an overwhelming image of Egyptian political and military leadership as being undefeatable. Mahmoud Hussein (1973) described Nasser's propaganda before the war as promising the people to fight a victorious war on their behalf, and hence the majority of people did not take part in the preparation for the war (p.254), making them feel so betrayed that they had lost a war without even participating in it. Ahmed Bahaa Shabaan¹⁴³, an Egyptian leftist activist, portrayed the gravity of the defeat for Egyptians by saying "imagine it was like you are in love with your beautiful wife, you see her like an angel, a faultless creature, and then all of a sudden you see her betraying you in front of your eyes, you will not believe it... you will only be shocked and feel helpless".

All segments of Egyptian society received the light verdicts with discontent, yet protests started in particular spaces, transforming these spaces from being compliant with the ruling regime into resisting it. The protests erupted on 21 February 1968 in munitions factories in *Helwan*, and more precisely in factory number '36' that specialised in the manufacturing of aircraft frames. The destruction of all bomber aircrafts and 85% of combat aircrafts while on the ground, without taking off from air bases or engaging in any combat (Montasir 2012¹⁴⁴), left the aircraft workers outraged by the verdicts and they started to discuss possible actions amongst themselves, forming large groups within factory '36'. The workers expressed their rage regarding the verdicts which were incompatible with the gravity of the defeat of 1967 and which brought dishonour to the Air Force and all those affiliated with it. Accordingly, the eruption of the protests in aircraft munitions factory number '36' is not a matter of coincidence, given the losses in the Air Force and the blame their leaders had faced following the defeat¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴² Jordan and Syria

¹⁴³ My interview, November 2012.

¹⁴⁴ Also see Pollack 2002

¹⁴⁵ Apart from putting the blame on Air Force leaders, the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer, was forced into early retirement following the defeat and after less than 4 months he committed suicide after being convicted with other 50 military officer of plotting a coup to overthrow Nasser.

The large groups of workers within aircraft factory number '36' started to join forces forming one huge group that encompassed almost all the workers in the aircraft factory, which looked like an internal demonstration inside the production unit of aircrafts (Heikal 2010). According to Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, *Al-Ahram* editor-in-chief at the time, the head of the factory sent security guards to the workers only to protect the aircrafts inside the factory and not to curb the spreading of the new space of resistance created by the workers in factory '36'. Moreover, Heikal (2010) argued that the workers agreed to protest outside their production units, yet within the boundaries of the factory, not to damage the machines and equipment used in the manufacturing of the aircrafts. Nevertheless, as the pace of the protests intensified, the workers decided to leave their production units and go beyond the protection of the aircrafts to expand their public space of resistance.

The workers' actions had fundamentally transformed the space of the factory into a contentious space through propagating new discourses within the factory. This was evident in the slogans raised by the workers since the beginning of the protests. These slogans included: 'There is no socialism without freedom' (*La ishterakeya bela horriyah*) and 'No mercy for the conspirators' (*La rahmah ma'a almoznebeen*) (Hussein 1973: 293), which shows that although the protests were triggered by the light verdicts on Air Force leaders, they challenged the Nasser regime's discourses and its monopolisation over the making of Egyptian public spaces. These new discourses and practices that were introduced to the factory for the first time since it was established at the end of the 1950s had constituted a public space of resistance within the factory, a public space that gained both visibility and identification.

The city of *Helwan*, where the protests started, is an example of the constitution of centralised regime loyal spaces. Nasser transformed the city of *Helwan*, which is 20 miles away from Cairo, into an industrial centre, which was initially used as a health resort because of its hot sulphur springs and green areas¹⁴⁶. In 1958, Nasser inaugurated the first steel and iron factory in *Helwan*, marking the beginning of heavy industries in Egypt (Nasser 1958). Other factories followed, including the munitions

¹⁴⁶ See (Abu-Lughod 1971: 162-163).

factories in *Helwan*, which were built following Egypt's arms deal with Czechoslovakia in September 1955¹⁴⁷, where Nasser realised the importance of building national munitions factories that were built with the assistance of the Soviet Union and Germany. After the Nasser regime had specified a space for the workers to both work and inhabit (building factories and residential areas beside the factories), the process of mobilising the workers was intensified. In July 1961 the regime declared the 'Socialist Decrees' that granted workers more rights. According to these measures, workers' wages were doubled and employment increased. Moreover, the regime nationalised many factories and companies, and the workers became employees of the state (Benin & Lockman 1987; Posusney 1997). On a political level, the workers were encouraged to become members of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU), the sole political organisation created by the ruling regime. Moreover, the workers' presence in the parliament (the nation's assembly)¹⁴⁸ was increasing significantly.

The refusal of *Helwan's* munitions workers of the verdicts against the Air Force generals in February 1968 was a confirmation that the space of the factory, though constituted by the ruling regime, could be re-defined, re-constituted and used to resist the ruling regime and its discourses. Moreover, it confirms that resistance is embedded within the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces. The struggle over the space of the factory, its meaning and the discourses it reflects was prominent during the contentions of February 1968. The ruling regime realised the dangers of re-defining the factory as a space that resisted its discourse. Since the start of the protests, members of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) in *Helwan*, who represented the discourse of the ruling regime, tried to join the angry workers to convince them not to go on a street demonstration. They were ordered to join the protests and stop the workers from taking to the streets or at least, if their attempts failed, they should join the demonstrations, lead them and make sure that they do not raise an anti-regime discourse (Hassouna 1968¹⁴⁹; Abdel Salam 1975: 121-2).

There were conflicting stories on whether the representatives of the ASU were ordered to join the protests or not. According to Heikal (2010), the protests on 21

¹⁴⁷ According to Ahmed Bahaa Shabaan, the arms deal came after the Israeli assault on Gaza in 1954.

¹⁴⁸ According to the constitution of 1962, 50% of the parliament's members should be workers and/or farmers, giving them more public presence and visibility.

¹⁴⁹ See the cabinet meeting on February 25, 1968 in Samy Sharaf (2005).

February were spontaneous, where workers had not planned to go on demonstrations the previous day, and hence there were no attempts from the representatives of the ASU to manipulate the demonstration or control it. Essam Hassouna (1968), the Minister of Justice at the time, and Abdel Salam (1975: 121-2), the public prosecutor, mentioned in the public prosecution investigations that the political representative of ASU in Helwan admitted meeting the night before the protests after knowing that the aircraft factory workers might go on street demonstrations the following day. They agreed that leaders of the ASU in Helwan should join the angry workers to stop them from taking to the streets or at least to organise the demonstration. The decision of the ASU to lead an anti-regime demonstration reflects the ruling regime's struggle to maintain its monopoly over the making of Egyptian public spaces.

The workers took to the streets regardless of the efforts of the leaders of the ASU. It seemed that the workers felt that their silence on the verdicts would give the impression that they were supportive to the ruling regime. Being part of the factory, a space that was constituted by the ruling regime and which reflected its authority, would mean that they supported the ruling regime. It was important for them to re-define the factory through introducing new discourses and new practices that were different, and in a way against those posed by the ruling regime. By doing so, they also changed the identification that was associated with the space of the factory; those who were present in the factory were not necessarily supporters of the regime.

The workers' discourse became bigger than the space of the factory and needed to go beyond it. Workers of factories number '135' and '360' joined the workers of factory number '36' in their protests (Abdel Salam 1975: 122). The discourse of resistance was gaining more visibility, and its space expanded to other factories. The factory conferred workers with the agency to act collectively and in a harmonious way. The space of the factory, with its identified boundaries, provided the workers with a shared identity. The angry workers decided to take to the streets to gain yet greater visibility for their discourse and hence expanded spaces of resistance. They decided to challenge those who claimed to represent the people by protesting in front of the parliament and the presidency (according to Abdel Salam the demonstration was supposed to go to parliament and the presidency). Again, members of the ASU thought that this might expand public spaces of resistance; they aimed at containing

the demonstrations within *Helwan*. Accordingly, they convinced the workers to submit their demands to the representatives of the ASU in *Helwan* and directed the demonstrations to the ASU headquarters in *Helwan*.

At this point, the ruling regime realised that the demonstrations should be stopped by force, and the spreading effect of the resistant space of the factory. Once the demonstration reached the police station in *Helwan*, the police clashed with the workers. The workers replied by throwing stones at the police who retaliated by firing live ammunition against the protesting workers (Hussein 1973: 293; Abdel Salam 1975; Assad 1987). The clashes between the workers and police lasted for hours and led to the occupation of *Helwan* police station by workers, forcing police officers to flee. The spatial dimension was manifested in such a confrontation between the police and the workers. The workers saw that the space of the police station represented the power and discourse of the ruling regime in *Helwan*, and hence they decided to occupy it. The destruction and occupation of the police station, which was as a manifestation of the ruling regime's power, was important in the process of remaking public spaces. The visibility of the space of the police destroyed and filled with anti-regime protestors would enhance the definition of public spaces as ones of resistance, rather than authority. Although the protestors were resisting the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces, they sought to monopolise the space of the factory, and then the space of the police station. Through the use of 'violence' against the police station, protestors were overcoming and altering the 'repertoire of public spaces', which contributed to the agency of space as being one of authority and power¹⁵⁰. Sewell (2009) used the term 'spatial agency' to refer to what Egyptian protestors tried to achieve through storming the police station in *Helwan* in order to alter spatial structures. Nevertheless, Sewell's concept is misleading; it should refer to the agency of the space not to the actors' ability to change spatial structures. Spatial agency should refer to space's ability to produce subjects, and not a subject's ability to change space.

The news of the bloody clashes between the police and the workers of *Helwan* reached the university students with exaggerated numbers of deaths, which came as a

¹⁵⁰ This process was repeated in different contentious moments in Egyptian contemporary history under Nasser, Sadat or Mubarak.

result of the regime's blackout on the events, prohibiting newspapers from reporting it¹⁵¹. Some workers tried to travel to Cairo to join forces with university students and take to the streets, regardless of the police efforts to blockade the *Helwan*-Cairo railroad line (Hussein 1973: 293). The public space of resistance constituted in the space of the factory and which spread to the surrounding streets of *Helwan* had expanded to reach universities and the streets of Egyptian cities.

In this section, I have shown how *Helwan* workers were building on a 'spatial agency' that the space of the factory had gained prior to the Nasser regime, being contentious spaces against colonial authority. I have argued that although Nasser attempted to alter the factory into a public space of authority through public performances, including delivering national speeches from factories and organising big rallies for Nasser, the factory's spatial repertoire of resistance regained strength. In the following section, I will discuss similar processes of the re-making of universities, *Al-Ahram* headquarters and the streets into public spaces of resistance during the contentions of February 1968.

THE UNIVERSITY, THE STREET AND AL-AHRAM

The factory was not the only space that was being constituted as a public space of resistance during the contentions of February 1968. The discourses of resistance that were intensified following the declaration of the verdicts against the Air Force leaders had spread beyond the space of the factory, moving to other spaces and re-defining them as public spaces of resistance. The most important of these spaces was the university. Regardless of the regime's ongoing attempts to define the university as belonging to the ruling regime that reflected its power, the students managed to capitalise on each moment of weakness in the ruling regime's discourse to re-define the university as a public space of resistance. Although the contestation over the making of the university as a public space had gone through various episodes, like the students protests in 1966 against the war in Yemen (El-Bendary 2008), I will particularly focus on the contentions of February (and also November) 1968, in which the university was re-defined as a public space that resisted the ruling regime and

¹⁵¹ *Al-Ahram* newspaper only started writing on the protests on 25 February 1968, after 5 days of protests.

which also had a spill over effect on other spaces, particularly the street and *Al-Ahram* headquarters.

Like the factory, the contestation over the re-making of the space of the university was triggered by the light verdicts in the Air Force trial. On 20 February, the students were preparing for a festive day the following day to celebrate International Student's Day in memory of the bloody protests of Egyptian and Indian students against British colonialism in 1946. Once the verdicts were declared, the students were outraged and decided that they should do something to express their rage (M. El-Hefnawy 2012, Pers. Comm., 18 Feb.). On February 21, discussions on the verdicts, their implications and the role of the political leadership were taking place in every faculty within almost all universities in Egypt, particularly the universities of Cairo, Ain Shams, and Alexandria. Amid such discussions, the news about the clashes between the workers and the police in *Helwan* spread across the various universities, and students decided to go on demonstrations against the light verdicts and police violence towards the workers of *Helwan*. University students questioned the discourse of the state, and wondered 'how a state that calls itself socialist fires live-ammunition against its own workers' (Sharaf 2000: p.158).

Like the factory, the universities' spatial repertoire of resistance was retrieved, and demonstrations started to march from one faculty to another within the universities. The demonstrations of Cairo University started as silent demonstrations within the university itself (Sharaf 2000: p.158). The silent demonstrations captured the uncertainty of the students' discourses at this point, which were not fully developed as anti-regime discourses. The students expressed their refusal of the verdicts and questioned the discourse of the ruling regime, yet without offering an alternative discourse. The visibility of the students, marching in the space of the university and increasing in numbers meant that the space of the university was being reshaped and re-defined. Nevertheless, the silence of the demonstration did not last long, and competing discourses started to surface, reflecting the struggles over the making of the university as a public space.

The students themselves were not sure what they were transforming the space of the university into. On the one hand, they were furious about the light verdicts and the

corruption within the political system that the defeat of 1967 had unveiled. On the other hand, they were not particularly against Nasser himself, at least at the beginning of the protests, and they had asked him to make the appropriate changes within the regime and punish the corrupted officials. Ahmed Sharaf, who had an important role in leading the protests, represented an example of those who were loyal to Nasser and tried to make a distinction between Nasser, the revolutionary leader, and the corrupted elite. According to Sharaf (2000) the space of the university should have reflected the revolutionary discourse of Nasser and hence given him more power to apply the necessary reform (p.154). Sharaf, who was a member of the central committee of the regime's Socialist Youth Organisation (SYO)¹⁵², tried to convince the protestors not to chant against Nasser and only focus on the light verdicts and the clashes with the workers. In other words, Sharaf was concerned that the university may have been transformed into an anti-Nasser space. Not only was Sharaf concerned, but also the security forces within the university, represented in the University Guards that were under the control of the Ministry of Interior and not the university administration (Awad 1977: 3).

The battle over the space of the university started with both sides, students and guards, trying to have physical control over strategic spaces within the space of the university on February 21. This battle was most evident at Cairo University. The university guards were also anxious that the regime's control over the space of the university might wane, and hence started to close big halls and big lecture rooms within the university, to prevent any massive gatherings by students within the university which may give the students the chance to: 1) constitute a public space through which they could deliver their discourse of resistance and 2) gain visibility in this newly constituted public space and hence increasing the possibility of it becoming bigger and expanding.

The demonstration started from the Faculty of Engineering, which is based outside the main campus of Cairo University and where a big conference was held to discuss the clashes in *Helwan*. The demonstration crossed the main road towards Cairo

¹⁵² The Socialist Youth Organisation (SYO) was an influential political organisation founded by Nasser in 1965 to mobilise students, workers and farmers aged between 17 and 35 years old. The organisation offered its members political training and education, with programmes on leader making.

University main campus, passing by various faculties within the campus. The university guards knew where the students were heading and hence they closed the biggest hall at Cairo University '*qa'et al'ihtefalat al-kubra*' (Festivals' Great Hall), with the capacity to accommodate more than 3500 students. The university students who marched from the Faculty of Engineering, and who were joined by students from other faculties, were furious to find out that the hall was closed and guarded by the university guards (Sharaf 2000: 159). They then moved to another big lecture hall '*modarag al-'ameed Badr*', which they also found locked up and guarded. Some students suggested going to the Faculty of Literature, where a lecture hall could possibly be opened (as it was not usually used for big student events). The students started running to the Faculty of Literature and more specifically to lecture hall '78', which is also a big hall. Once the university guards saw the students running to the Faculty of Literature, they also ran after them (ibid: 160), not to stop the students but rather to reach the big lecture hall before them, control it and lock it up. Nevertheless, the students reached lecture hall '78' before the guards and occupied it (ibid: 160). After succeeding in occupying and controlling lecture hall '78', the students constituted their public space of resistance through which they channelled their discourse.

It is important to note, however, that the students' discourse cannot be described as being homogenous. On the contrary, at the time some students tried to shape the discourse of the students as standing beside Nasser¹⁵³ and re-affirming the loyalty of the space of the university to Nasser, while pushing him to adopt reformist policies to make sure that the discourse is coherent and hence maintain control over the university. Others were against the ruling regime and its authoritarianism. Amid such contentions between the various discourses of resistance being spelled out within the public space constituted in the lecture hall, a woman entered the lecture hall, crying and narrating how the police had fired live ammunition at the workers of Helwan which had resulted in numerous deaths (Sharaf 2000: 161). The words of the woman had given strength to the discourse of resistance that was against the ruling regime. As

¹⁵³ This trend was lead by Ahmed Sharaf, who had a significant role in leading the protests of the students in February 1968. Sharaf addressed the students on the importance of standing beside Nasser, urging him to apply revolutionary reforms. Sharaf's aim was to direct the demonstrations to the streets yet while being supportive of Nasser. (See the points that Sharaf stressed in his address to the students: Sharaf 2000: 160).

their discourse gained momentum, the angry students decided to go outside the space of the university. They left lecture hall '78' in the Faculty of Literature and moved quickly towards the iron gates of the university but found them closed and guarded to stop them from getting outside the university (ibid: 161). Now the ruling regime had realised that the university had turned into a public space of resistance, something that could not be stopped, but could at least be contained. The spreading effect of the public space that was constituted within the university should be kept within its boundaries. The students marched within the university chanting against the ruling regime and lack of democracy¹⁵⁴.

After two days of holidays¹⁵⁵ and the hibernation of the protestors, the battle over the space of the university resumed¹⁵⁶, but this time not only within the space of the university but beyond it to the space of the street, the most strategic space, given its visibility and accessibility. The contestations had also reached *Al-Ahram* headquarters (the regime's media centre). On 24 February, students from various universities refused to attend lectures and gathered within their universities. At Ain Shams University, the students gathered to decide on whether to take to the streets or stay within the university. They met with Dr. Helmi Morad, the rector of Ain Shams University, who, according to *Al-Ahram*, managed to persuade them to keep their actions within the university (*Al-Ahram*, 25 February 1968). Nevertheless, the rector's attempt did not last for long, and the students took to the streets like their fellow students at Cairo University. According to Moataz el-Hefnawy, engineering student and the head of the Students' Union in Ain Shams University, it was important for the students to get out of the university and reach out to the streets in order to reach out to people; "the regime wanted us inside the university only, they do

¹⁵⁴ At this point the students had formed a committee, composed of two students from each faculty, to meet the president of the university and project their demands (Sharaf 2000: 162).

¹⁵⁵ Thursday February 22 was a national holiday (Unity Day) and February 23 was a Friday (weekend in Egypt).

¹⁵⁶ According to Ahmed Sharaf (2000), there were a lot of contentions taking place behind the scenes over the control of public spaces in these two days from both sides: the students and the representatives of the ruling regime. Both sides were aiming at expanding (the students) or contract (the ruling regime) the public space of resistance constituted within the university. The ruling regime wanted to make sure that if the protests resumed (which was the greater possibility) they would have to stay within the university walls and gates, and that any attempt to take to the streets should be prevented. The students, on the other hand, were making a plan on how to make the protests succeed in breaking into the streets, and even more importantly to keep the discourse of the students unified, so as to make sure that the making of the streets as public spaces of resistance was an extension of the public space constituted in the university (See Ahmed Sharaf (2000) p.166- 168).

not want us to go outside cause they do not want us to engage with the public cause they know this will be very dangerous” (M. El-Hefnawy 2012, Pers. Comm. 18 Feb.). This reflects the different forms of agency that spaces retain. Spaces of the university and the factory are neatly defined with strict boundaries, which offer students and workers shared identities. Nevertheless, they are limited and relatively isolated from those who hold different identity. On the contrary, although the street does not have precisely defined boundaries, it offers its users great visibility and hence a stronger influence.

At Cairo University, the students gathered in an open space that linked the faculties of Law and Literature as well as the Festivals’ Great Hall (all of which are very close to Cairo University’s main gate). According to Sharaf, political discussions were on the rise in this space within the university campus and students kept increasing till the number reached around 3,000 students, when one of the protestors chanted ‘go outside of the university’ ‘we have to go beyond the walls’, and students *en masse* attacked the iron gates of Cairo University and broke them, reaching out to the streets and particularly to University Square (*midan el-gam’a*) (Sharaf 2000: 169). Sharaf details the path of the demonstration and how it moved from one faculty to another, in a scene similar to a liberating army that moves from a city to another to liberate its people. The demonstration moved from the main campus of Cairo University, to other faculties that are located outside of the university campus. Students’ discourses of resistance were strong enough to go beyond the space of the university to the bigger, more visible and more accessible space of the street. The same scene was repeated in other universities and students took to the streets. The students took multiple routes in their demonstrations. Some students went to *Al-Ahram* headquarters¹⁵⁷, others to the parliament and to the presidential mansion (Hussein 1973: 294). The students’ selection of such spaces is significant, where all of these spaces represented the channel through which the ruling regime’s discourse is propagated.

¹⁵⁷ Al-Ahram Headquarters was considered a spatial manifestation of the ruling regime’s media manipulation, seeing that Al-Ahram newspaper, headed by Heikal, had a prominent role in manipulating public opinion, providing the public with false information on war preparations, the stance of the army and economic progress. The making of Al-Ahram into a public space of resistance will be discussed later on in the chapter.

Asef Bayat (1997b, 2010) sheds light on ‘street politics’ and the relevance of the ‘street’ in understanding Middle Eastern politics. Bayat (1997b) argues that the ‘street as a public place possesses this intrinsic feature, making it possible for people to mobilize without having an active network’ (p.16). As discussed in chapter two, I criticised Bayat for taking the street for granted as an available space to be used, ignoring the role of political actors in making and re-making the street, as well as the role of the street in defining and re-defining identities. I showed how Nasser aimed at re-defining Egyptian streets into spaces of resistance against colonial powers, yet also as spaces of authority that enhanced his own power. I demonstrated how the space of the street gained agency, constituting the identities of those who took to the streets on 9 and 10 of June following the defeat of 1967 as being pro-Nasser and anti-imperialist, regardless of the fact that Nasser was responsible for such a devastating defeat. Through discussing the contentious events of February 1968, I showed how workers and students challenged the ‘spatial agency’ that led Egyptians to support Nasser even after his defeat. It was important for workers and students to go beyond the space of the factory and university to challenge the agency that the street retained and which led to the constitution of pro-Nasser subjectivities.

As the students succeeded in breaking the iron gates of their universities and taking to the streets in massive demonstrations, the process of constituting the street as a public space started. The making of the street as a public space of resistance was also the product of contentions and contestations between various political forces and their competing discourses. The discourses of resistance raised by the students were not homogenous. There were discourses of resistance that challenged some practices of the ruling regime like the light verdicts against Air Force leaders and the violent clashes with *Helwan* workers. Nevertheless, such discourses did not challenge the ruling authority itself represented in Nasser; on the contrary, it actually reinforced its power, by resorting to the ruling regime to apply reform. This discourse was manifested in the slogans raised in the streets on 24 February, after the students broke the gates of the universities. Some slogans were ‘instant demand oh Nasser... instant change oh Nasser’ (*matlab fawry ya Nasser... taghyeer fawry ya Nasser*) and ‘the revolutionary is at the top of the regime, and the base (the people) is perfect (revolutionary also)’ (*al-thawry ‘ala ra’s elnezam w el-qa’da akher tamam*) (Sharaf 2000: 167). Moataz el-Hifnawy, who was arrested after his participation in the first

day of the protests, confirms “almost 90% of those who participated in the protests of February 1968 were not against Nasser, we were part of the Nasserite establishment... we participated in the protests to ask Nasser himself to pursue the appropriate reforms within the system...” (M. El-Hefnawy 2012, Pers. Comm. 18 Feb.). Ahmed Bahaa Shabaan, who also participated in the protests in Assuit University (in Upper Egypt), agreed with Moataz, confirming that Nasser had mobilised the youth of the university politically and they were appreciating that he had empowered them (Shabaan 2011, Pers. Comm. 20 Nov.). Nevertheless, they were mobilised to support the ruling regime and not to challenge it. Rimmah Assad, who was very young when he participated in the protests of February 1968, yet wrote a book on the students movement to historicise such events, argued that although the protests were not openly against Nasser, the protests were implicitly challenging Nasser and his regime (R. Assad 2012, Pers. Comm., 25 March).

There were other discourses of resistance that were openly challenging the ruling regime, and Nasser at the top of it. These discourses of resistance were manifested in the slogans raised by protestors like ‘Stop the rule of intelligence’, ‘Down with the Police state’, ‘Down with the intelligence state’, ‘Down with Heikal lying press’, ‘No life with terror... No knowledge without freedom’, ‘Don’t discuss the Air Force question, discuss freedom’, ‘Nasser there are limits to patience... The tenth of June could never happen again’ and ‘On the ninth of June we supported you... Today we oppose you’ (Abdallah 1985: 152-153). These two last slogans in particular refer to the dates of 9 and 10 of June 1967, when Egyptians of various political orientations took to the streets to express their refusal of Nasser’s resignation following the defeat in the Six-Day War. The defeat of 1967 had certainly weakened the discourse of the ruling regime immensely, which jeopardised its public spaces of authority, most notably the street. The physical presence of millions of Egyptians in the streets, chanting ‘Don’t leave us Nasser’, ‘We will fight’, were manifestations of the spatial agency that the street gained as being pro-Nasser, which reinforced the legitimacy of the regime. The demonstrations of the 9 and 10 of June are significant in that they renewed the regime’s definition of the street as a public space of authority, a space that reflected the power of the regime and paid support to its leader. Heikal (2002) mentioned that the demonstrations were a renewal of Nasser’s legitimacy, a temporary legitimacy.

On 24 February 1968, the first day the students took to the streets to challenge the ruling regime, the street was constituted as a public space of resistance¹⁵⁸. Regardless of the diversity of the resistance discourses in February 1968, the street was transformed into a space of resistance after being constituted as a public space of authority during the Nasser regime. The two pictures below (figures 2 and 3) were taken from the street in two different contentious moments in which the street was constituted as a public space. Although the pictures look very similar, with thousands of people marching the streets of Cairo, the public spaces constituted in each moment of contention were quite different. In the first picture, taken on 10 June 1967, the street gained constitutive powers, defining the identities of those who marched in it as being pro-Nasser. The demonstrators held portraits of Nasser, banners with his name and mottos reinforcing the identification of the street as a public space that supported the discourse of the ruling regime¹⁵⁹. In the second picture, taken on 24 February 1968, the agency of the street was challenged and the street was constituted as a public space that resisted the ruling regime. Two images of the same space, the street, yet the pictures show two contested public spaces.

¹⁵⁸ The students came from various universities: Cairo, *Ain Shams*, Alexandria, *Assuit* and so forth. The demonstration that took place in *Ain Shams* University was mentioned in the official newspaper *Al-Ahram* because of the meeting between the students and the rector of the university Dr. Helmi Morad (*Al-Ahram* 25 Feb. 1968).

¹⁵⁹ Hussein (1973: 265-6) refutes the argument that the demonstrations of the 9 and 10 June were in support of the Nasser regime. He argued that these demonstrations were not supporting Nasser but were rather aware of the dangers of his resignation and continuation of the fight. For Hussein, the demonstrations of 9 and 10 June represented the beginning of the mass movement that became matured in the events of February and November 1968. Nevertheless, the rapid movement of the masses, after hearing the resignation of Nasser suggests that they supported Nasser, particularly with regard to the fighting.



Figure (2): Egyptians taking to the streets on 10 June 1967, demanding Nasser to withdraw his resignation (Source: Al-Ahram, 11 June 1967)

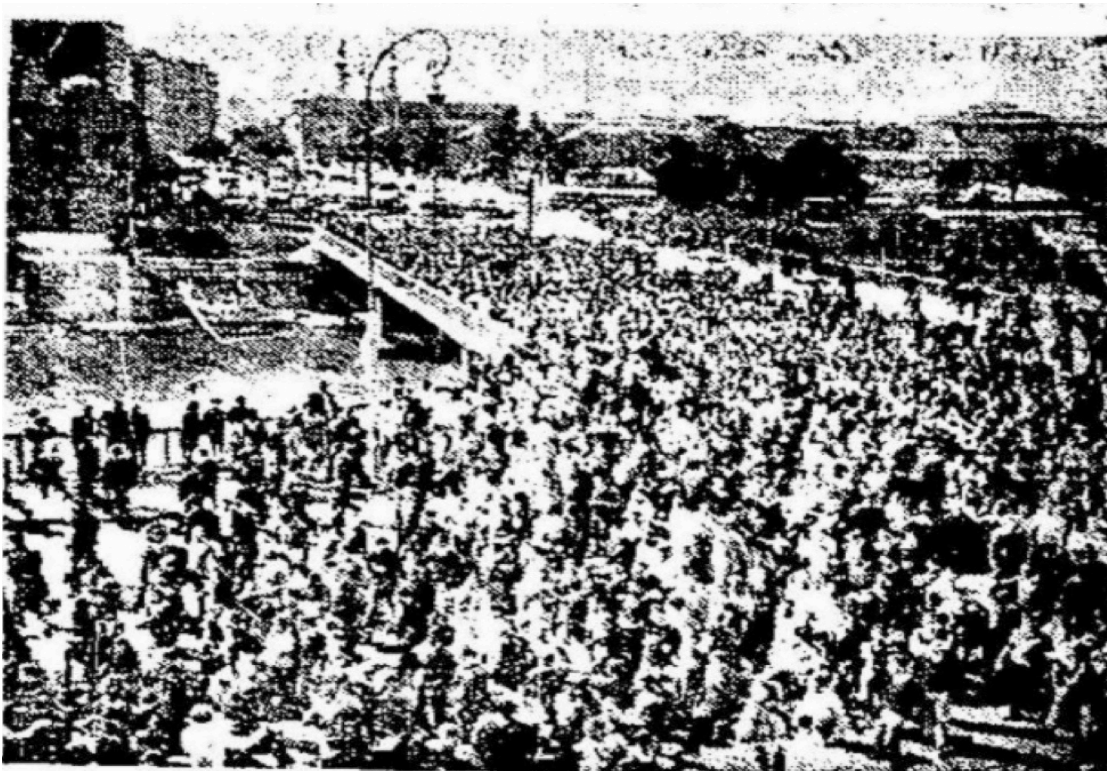


Figure (3): Egyptians taking to the streets on 24 February 1968, calling for more democratic measures and more transparency (Source: Al-Ahram, 25 Feb. 1968)

The expectations of Ahmed Sharaf¹⁶⁰ that the street demonstrations of February 1968 might be similar to those that took place in June 1967, and which supported Nasser, faded away¹⁶¹. What Sharaf ignored was that although the street had been defined as a public space of authority during the Nasser regime, this definition was temporary and dependent on the discourse of the ruling regime. Once Nasser's discourse was weakened, discourses of resistance managed to transform the street into a public space of resistance. The visibility of the protestors marching in the streets, not holding pictures of Nasser or slogans like 'we die for you Nasser' or singing songs like 'oh Gamal (Nasser)... you are loved by millions', and hence the transformation of these public spaces challenged and undermined the legitimacy of the ruling regime, which was inherently dependent upon public spaces and their visibility as supportive to the ruling regime.

After the students took to the streets on 24 February, they marched to various destinations, the most important of these being the parliament, the presidential mansion and *Al-Ahram* headquarters. These spaces shared something in common; they all represented major channels where the discourse of the ruling regime was being propagated, and hence the students were eager to convey their discourse of resistance through the same channels. The students' task was to be physically present in such spaces and deliver their discourse of resistance. Students coming from Cairo University marched to the parliament to meet Anwar el-Sadat, the Speaker of the parliament at the time. Students gathered in the open space outside the parliament, and Sadat appeared from one of the balconies of the parliament building that overlooked its open space, showing interest in listening to the students' discourses.

¹⁶⁰ Ahmed Sharaf, who was arrested and considered a suspect in planning the uprising of February 1968, regardless of being a member in the central committee of the Socialist Youth Organisation (SYO), which was an influential political organisation founded by Nasser in 1965 to mobilise students, workers and farmers aged between 17 and 35 years old. The organisation offered its members political training and education, with programmes on leader making.

¹⁶¹ Even Ahmed Sharaf was arrested and was considered the first suspect in stirring public unrest. It was not important anymore for the ruling regime whether Sharaf and many of his colleagues were supportive of Nasser or not. The fact that they had participated in a process through which the university and the street were transformed into public spaces of resistance, challenging the authority of the ruling regime was enough to arrest them.

He then met with a delegation from the protesting students and promised them that they would not be arrested (Al-Ahram 25 Feb. 1968)¹⁶².

A group of students decided to march towards *Al-Ahram* Newspaper headquarters, Egypt's leading newspaper at the time headed by Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, Nasser's close adviser and friend. He was considered Egypt's second man. The angry protestors, most of which were students, surrounded *Al-Ahram* headquarters from all sides. They were chanting against the "lies" that were published by *Al-Ahram*, most notably against its editor-in-chief Heikal, calling him a liar and demanding an honest press. According to Heikal (2010), he allowed the protestors to get inside *Al-Ahram* headquarters. Heikal denied that the students forcefully invaded *Al-Ahram* in a phone call with President Nasser, but rather argued that he allowed them to enter to discuss their demands and allowed them to express themselves. Heikal narrates how the discussions took place between multiple intellectuals, including him, and the students within *Al-Ahram* headquarters. He also mentioned how students were keen to see their demands, as well as a detailed description of the events of the day, published in *Al-Ahram* newspaper, something that Heikal claimed was not possible due to logistical limitations (Heikal 2010). It was important for the students to transform *Al-Ahram* headquarters, which propagated the discourses of the ruling regime, into a public space of resistance that gained visibility¹⁶³.

The reason why *Al-Ahram* had risen as a contentious space, which had been constituted by both forces of authority and resistance during the contentious events of February 1968, had its roots in the Nasser regime's constitution of *Al-Ahram* as a leading public sphere controlled by the regime. According to Dabous (1993), the relationship between the ruling regime and the press post 1952 could be divided into four stages. The first stage was from 1952 till 1954. The relationship between the

¹⁶² All the students who met Sadat were arrested regardless of his 'word of honour' that they would not be arrested and he asked them to leave all their details.

¹⁶³ Heikal expressed how the students were so devoted to discussing their demands with various intellectuals. He mentioned that students who were discussing the political situation in Egypt did not want to leave *Al-Ahram* headquarters and wanted to keep debating with the various intellectuals and journalists in *Al-Ahram*. Some of those students who were talking to Tawfic el-Hakim (an Egyptian prominent intellectual and novelist) were sympathetic to Nasser and his discourse yet had turned against it after Nasser's death and would not let him go home to sleep, which had pushed Heikal to rent a bus to take those students along with Tawfic el-Hakim to his home to continue the discussions on the way. The story reflects the persistence of the students not to leave *Al-Ahram*, through which they managed to channel their discourse of resistance.

regime and the press was not clear and unstable in that period, where ‘censorship was imposed and lifted several times’ (p.100). One reason behind such a lack of clarity was the unstable and confused discourse of the ruling regime at the time, before Nasser consolidated power. The following stage extended from 1954 to 1960, where the discourse of the regime was being formulated. The final stage was from 1960 to 1968, which witnessed the nationalisation of the press¹⁶⁴, blocking access or visibility to other political forces that may have challenged the ruling regime’s discourse. The students wanted to disrupt this relationship between the regime and the press, in general, and *Al-Ahram* in particular, by being physically present in *Al-Ahram* headquarters with their discourse of resistance and their persistence that their demands should be published in the newspaper.

On the following day, *Al-Ahram* tried to show that the uprising was a reactionary moment that came in response to the light verdicts on the Air Force commanders. Yet the students wanted to stress that it was a struggle over the making of public spaces. They wanted to publish their demands, which developed from calling for a retrial of the Air Force leaders and an investigation of the police violence against *Helwan* workers, into calling for the freedom of expression and of the press, the release of their colleagues who were arrested during the uprising, a democratically elected parliament and the dismantling of the ASU, the implementation of the political freedoms laws and the withdrawal of police and intelligence from interfering in university affairs (Abdalla 1985: 152). The students’ demand to remove security intelligence from the university was to confirm the students’ definition of the public space of the university as being a public space of resistance, to reassure their definition of the university being a public space of resistance, something that would allow them later to gain leverage and a stronger position while seeking to re-define more public spaces as ones of resistance, like the street.

The continuation of street protests would mean that the ruling regime had permanently lost its public spaces of authority and that public spaces of resistance

¹⁶⁴ The decision to nationalise the Egyptian press was taken on 24 May 1960 to grant the ruling regime more power in mobilising the masses (See Dabous 1993). Besides the printed press, the Nasser regime had also used the radio (the establishment of Arab Voice –Sout al-Arab- in 1953) and television (which was first introduced to the Egyptian society in the 60s). Nevertheless, during the protests of February 1968, students had specifically stormed Al-Ahram.

constituted would last for a long time. Moreover, the continuation of the protests in the streets, with the visibility they attained, would undermine the legitimacy of the ruling regime, which primarily depended on the street for legitimation. Accordingly, the ruling regime arrested most of those who led the protests to weaken their discourse of resistance. The police sent vehicles with microphones across the streets demanding the students to return home immediately because there were thugs and criminals who had infiltrated the corps of the students (Al-Ahram 25 Feb. 1968)¹⁶⁵.

On 25 February the ruling regime issued a statement ordering the universities to be closed in an attempt to curb the expanding public spaces of resistance (Al-Ahram 26 Feb. 1968). When the students went to their universities on the following day they were furious to find that the ruling regime was attempting to isolate their public spaces of resistance. A fierce confrontation between the students and the police erupted which pushed the students to take refuge in the university regardless of the fact that it was officially closed. This was particularly the case with the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University, where the police surrounded the students and the students threw stones at the police to stop them from getting close to the university. The students were protecting the space of the university and declared that they would keep protesting until their demands were met. The protests of the students of the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University continued till 27 February, when a compromise was reached to transfer the students in the sit-in by government cars to meet with the Speaker of the parliament again and other ministers. The students wanted to give greater visibility to their public space of resistance and to their new discourse of resistance within the university and hence they demanded that their demands be published in *Al-Ahram*, which the Speaker of the parliament refused.

After the events of February 1968, Central Security Forces, a paramilitary police, was introduced to overcome protests (Abdalla 1985: 154). In other words, the ruling regime, after losing its power in constituting public spaces of authority due to the weakness of its discourse, resorted to force in order to, at least, stop discourses of resistance from constituting public spaces of resistance. In the following section, I

¹⁶⁵ Even Nasser stressed this point in his speech from Helwan, emphasising that not all those who were in the streets were students. This was meant to undermine the discourse of the students and the public spaces of resistance that they constituted.

will focus on another episode of contention, which also led to the rise of public spaces of resistance in the spaces of the school, the university and the streets.

It is important to note that after the formal ending of the contentions between the ruling regime and protestors, which lasted for eight days, Nasser decided to address the nation on 30 March 1968 from *Helwan* factory. In his speech, Nasser repeated that the protests that had started in *Helwan* and spread across the country were ‘a misunderstanding’ and were primarily led by leaders of the ASU to protect the protestors (Nasser 1968a)¹⁶⁶. The selection of the space of the factory, where the contentions were initiated, was very significant in that it reflected Nasser’s attempt to re-claim and re-define the factory as a space that was loyal to him. He wanted to rule out the possibility that these public spaces could be defined as public spaces of resistance.

November 1968: Mansoura/ Alexandria

The contentious events of February 1968 represented the first time since the Nasser regime had consolidated power in 1954 in which public spaces of resistance had gained such visibility and strength. The events compelled the ruling regime to alter its discourse and incorporate political reform, which was manifested in the 30 March declaration. The importance of the events of February 1968 rested in the ability of political actors, most notably workers and students, to transform multiple spaces into public spaces of resistance. I stressed that public spaces are the product of political contentions between various political actors, and hence their definition and characteristics are temporary. Nevertheless, in repeated episodes of contentions, these temporary characteristics of public spaces are either confirmed or challenged by stronger discourses.

The students took every opportunity to constitute their public spaces of resistance. At that point, the trigger was not entirely important, what was more important was their

¹⁶⁶ Nasser confessed, however, that there were problems with the political system that should be addressed, in the 30 March Declaration, where Nasser altered the ruling regime’s discourse, incorporating some of the demands of the protestors.

persistence in solidifying their discourse of resistance whenever they had the opportunity, and whenever they found the discourse of the ruling regime was weakening. In this section, I will discuss the contentions of November 1968, which started in the delta city of *Mansoura* and spread to the Mediterranean city of Alexandria.

THE SCHOOL/ THE STREET: MANSOURA

Since the contentions of February 1968, the discourses of resistance had been on the rise. In November 1968, only nine months after the February protests of the students and the workers, contentions erupted again and public spaces of resistance were constituted. In February 1968, the factory, the university, the street and *Al-Ahram* headquarters were all constituted as public spaces of resistance. In November 1968, the secondary school, the university and the street had risen as public spaces of resistance. The rise of such spaces as public spaces came as a result of contentions between the ruling regime and students. The contentions of November were fiercer than those of February and the scale of violence was unprecedented (Assad 2012, Pers. Comm., 25 March). The ruling regime was keen not to allow the spreading effect of public spaces of resistance, and was unwilling to modify its discourse again. On the other hand, the protestors wanted to constitute public spaces of resistance that were not temporary, but were permanently protected from the ruling regime's interventions.

The contestation over the making of public spaces started in the delta city of *Mansoura*, known for its political diversity (Hussein 1973: 313), and in response to the decision of the Ministry of Education to change the university admission regulations to be stricter. According to the new education act, secondary students would not be allowed to stand for baccalaureate examinations indefinitely. Also secondary students would have to guarantee an overall pass in all subjects (Al-Ahram, 19 November 1968: 1)¹⁶⁷. Accordingly, the act itself was considered a reformist

¹⁶⁷ Before this act, students were allowed to stand for the baccalaureate exams for an indefinite number of times, and were allowed to go to university even if they failed in one of two subjects (usually foreign languages- English and French).

educational act to improve the deteriorated educational system. Nevertheless, although the act was seen as a progressive step in the right direction of reforming the Egyptian educational system, it was not politically calculated. The educational act came after the February 1968 contentions, in which the students of the university played a pivotal role. Most of the students who led the protests were older than their fellow students, given the fact that there were no regulations regarding the number of times they could fail their exams, either in the baccalaureate or during the university years. Moreover, the lack of such regulations had granted both secondary students and university students the chance to engage in political activities without the fear of being expelled from school or university.

Once the new educational act was declared in newspapers, the contentions erupted. On 20 November, students from two private secondary schools in Mansoura, *Al-Felal* and *al-Tarbiyyah al-haditha*¹⁶⁸ (Modern Education School), marched in the streets of the city of *Mansoura* to express their rejection of the new educational act (Al-Ahram 22 Nov. 1968: 1). In a scene similar to that of February, when students of Cairo University were passing by various faculties chanting for them to join the protests and take to the streets, students of private secondary schools were moving from one secondary school to another, calling for their students to join them in their street protests against the new educational act issued by the government (Al-Ahram 25 Nov. 1968: 3). In doing so, secondary school students were transforming the street into a public space that resisted the discourse of the ruling regime, represented in the educational act.

The students felt that the ruling regime was turning its back on them. For a long time, the Nasser regime had invested in university education, and had adopted a policy of increasing the number of students admitted to schools and universities, and moreover promised all graduates government jobs, regardless of the fact that the state bureaucracy had enough employees and these graduates were considered redundant (Nasser 1968b)¹⁶⁹. The regime's policy was to advocate quantity over quality (Abdalla 1985: 104). The policy matched the ruling regime's aim of constituting public spaces

¹⁶⁸ Known for their older students (can put quality over quantity)

¹⁶⁹ In the meeting of the Central Committee of the ASU, Nasser mentioned that the state was employing university graduates and paying them regardless of the fact that the state did not need their services.

of authority that would support the ruling regime. Having more students in schools and universities who were granted access to such spaces by the ruling regime's populist policies and discourses would guarantee their loyalty and support of its discourse and the transformation of the spaces of schools and universities into public spaces of authority. The new educational act, which came after the protests of February 1968, would mean for students that access to the spaces of schools and universities was not unrestricted. The students interpreted the regime's educational act as a means of restricting their access to and presence in the schools and universities, and hence regardless of the reformist tendency of the new educational act, it simply meant for the students adding more restrictions.

According to official reports, unlike the February protests, secondary school students were throwing stones at other secondary schools to force them to join the protests (*Al-Ahram*, 25 November 1968: 3; Helmi Morad, 27 November 1968: 110). From the government side, it was important to stress this point to prove that those who participated in the street protests were not convinced by the discourse of the secondary school students, and hence the public space constituted by the students in the street was weak, because it depended on forcing people to join. Nevertheless, the fact that the protests lasted for several days, and being transferred to the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, made it hard to believe that the students were throwing stones to force their fellow students to join, but rather it seemed that it was one technique to make their discourse of resistance louder and more visible. The same scene was repeated but this time by secondary school students, in which they were also passing by each secondary school and bringing its students out. The reason for this was to enhance their discourse of resistance and hence enable them to constitute public spaces of resistance that gained visibility. By having more students in the street, who were reflecting the discourse of resistance, the students were actually imposing their discourse on the street, transforming it into a public space of resistance. Reiterating the ruling regime's discourse of containing public spaces of resistance, an *Al-Ahram* reporter, Makram Mohamed Ahmed, criticised the students' decision to take to the streets, arguing that they were allowed to express their opinion yet it should be within their schools or through the official channels (*Al-Ahram*, 25 November 1968: 3).

The ruling regime's attempts to limit public spaces of resistance in *Mansoura* were several. At the beginning of the protests, the Secretary General of the governorate of *Mansoura*, along with some key officials from the ASU, were 'following the protestors in the streets of *Mansoura*' (Al-Ahram 25 November 1968: 3), asking them to limit their demonstration within a specific location (*al-Malek al-Saleh* school which was a governmental public school) to discuss their opinions and objections against the new educational act. The selection of a governmental school of *al-Malek al-Saleh* for such discussions was significant and was informed by several factors. First, the students had already reached the governmental school that was characterised as being a modern one, which was newly built by the regime with huge glassy windows that distinguished its buildings. If the students started throwing rocks as they did with other schools, then the school would be severely damaged, which would weaken the discourse of the ruling regime and the image of the government. The visibility of a damaged governmental school by students who rejected a government sponsored educational act, and the scene of its students joining the street demonstrations, would certainly weaken the discourse of authority and public spaces of authority as well. Moreover, *al-Malek al-Saleh* school was considered the last chance to stop the secondary school students from engaging with their fellow students from technical vocational schools and university, something that would give inimitable strength to the students' resistance discourse and the public spaces they constituted. Finally, succeeding in persuading the students to get into a debate with the ruling regime representatives would guarantee that the public space of resistance constituted in the street had ended and the discourse of the students was not resistant to the ruling regime discourse but was rather a misunderstanding between two teams that belong to the same discourse of authority¹⁷⁰.

After intensive efforts, the students stopped protesting and discussed the new educational act with the key officials of the ASU and the Secretary General of the governorate of Mansoura Mohamed al-Sayyid Abdel Rahman, who called the Minister of Education Dr. Helmi Mourad to convey the students' concerns about the new act. The Minister of Education, who was in *Minya* province to discuss the new

¹⁷⁰ The Secretary General of the governorate of Mansoura and the Minister of Education had stressed several times in the meeting before the ASU that the students who participated in meetings with them had confessed that there was only a misunderstanding from the students' side regarding the new educational act.

act, informed the governor that the act would not affect the students this year and would not be applied retrospectively (Al-Ahram, 25 Nov. 1968: 3)¹⁷¹. Moreover, the Minister of Education asked the Secretary General of the governorate of *Mansoura* to print his illustrations of the act in publications and distribute them in the streets of *Mansoura*. This was to weaken the discourse of the students by stressing that the educational act would not affect current students and hence there was no reason for their protests and their public space of resistance. Nevertheless, the lack of trust in the ruling regime discourse, which intensified after the defeat of 1967, pushed the students not to believe the words of the governor or the Minister of Education, and they decided not to give up the public space they constituted in the streets. From their side, the Secretary General of the governorate of *Mansoura* and other key officials in the ASU exerted countless efforts to prevent the making of the street into a public space of resistance for another day. Apart from distributing publications with illustrations of the new educational act by the Minister of Education in schools, universities and the streets of *Mansoura*, in the evening, the Governor of *Mansoura* met with the parents of the students who led the protests and forced them to write certifications/declarations that they would warn their sons from joining in street demonstrations. Moreover, the parents of the students had also written declarations that they were responsible for paying any charges of the damage that had resulted from street demonstrations (Abdel Rahman¹⁷², 1968, ASU Central Committee Report, 27 Nov.: 113). These practices of the Secretary General of the governorate of *Mansoura* went in harmony with the regime's discourse on the street as belonging to the ruling regime. He confirmed 'we made the families of the students sign declarations that they would be responsible for paying the charges of any damage' (Abdel Rahman, 1968, ASU Central Committee Report, 27 Nov.: 113).

Regardless of the ruling regime's attempts to prevent the process of the making of the streets of *Mansoura* into public spaces, on 21 November, students left their schools and took to the streets for the second day. The students of *Al-Azhar* Religious Institute initiated the protests of the day. Around 3,000 students took to the streets refuting the new educational act, fearing that it might be applied to them. The Minister of

¹⁷¹ The minister had also promised to provide the students with extra classes to improve their ability to pass the exams.

¹⁷² Mohamed al-Sayyid Abdel Rahman is the Secretary General of the governorate of Mansoura.

Education declared that *Al-Azhar* had its own educational system and hence the act would not be applied to the students, but the students did not stop and continued their demonstrations (Al-Ahram 1968: 3). The students thought that their public space of resistance had become stronger and they had to keep hold of it until the government complied with their demands. The lack of trust in the ruling regime and its discourse left the students with no option but to hold on to what they managed to create; a physical space in which their discourse was manifested and was gaining visibility. If they lost this space, they would lose their power and would not have the power to alter the discourse of the ruling regime. Accordingly, and regardless of the ruling regime's desperate attempts to contain the resistant public spaces constituted in the street, students continued to protest outside of their schools. They repeated that they did not trust the ruling regime and wanted it to withdraw the educational act before they would leave the streets (Abdalla 1985: 160) (i.e. they wanted the ruling regime to alter its discourse of authority).

The route of the street demonstrations of the day was significant to the understanding of the strategies used by students in order to transform the streets of *Mansoura* into public spaces of resistance. The students of *Al-Azhar* marched to the schools that were transformed into public spaces of resistance on the previous day, *Al-Felal* and *al-Tarbeyyah al-Haditha* (Abdel Rahman 1968, ASU Central Committee Report, 27 Nov.: 131). The students had particularly chosen these two schools given that they initiated the discourse of resistance, and hence their attempt to call them to leave the school and join the street protests for a second day would not be a hard task and would enhance the discourse of resistance. Indeed, *Al-Azhar* students were right; the students from *al-Felal* and *al-Tarbeyyah al-Haditha* (Modern Education) took to the streets of *Mansoura*, regardless of the governor's warnings to their families. The demonstration then reached *al-Malek al-Saleh* governmental school, which hosted the meeting between the students and the governor, and threw rocks at it, damaging its glass windows (ibid: 113). The students' attack on the governmental school was inherently an attack against the discourse of the ruling regime, the discourse of authority that was manifested in the governmental school. Protesting students kept marching in the streets of *Mansoura*, from one school to another, calling their students to join them in resisting the ruling regime's policies. The Secretary General of the governorate of *Mansoura* and the members of the ASU were following the

students, trying hard to stop their advance in transforming the streets into public spaces of resistance (Abdel Rahman 1968, ASU Central Committee Report, 27 Nov.: 131). The demonstrators reached the Technical schools, whose students took to the streets to join the protests (Ibid: 114). Seeing that the streets were filled with secondary students, the next step was to reach the space of the university, which would increase the momentum of their resistance and hence of their public spaces. The police put a cordon round faculties and higher institutes to prevent their contact with secondary school students (Ibid: 116). Becoming angry from the police practices that aimed at containing their progressing public spaces of resistance, the secondary school students decided to surround the security administration building and started throwing stones at it. Policemen replied by firing live ammunition killing three students and one peasant, with many injuries (Abu Nosseir, Minister of Justice Report to the National Congress of the ASU, Al-Ahram, 3 Dec 1968). After violent clashes between forces of resistance and authority, the public spaces of resistance had eventually spread to the space of the university, but in another city, Alexandria.

THE UNIVERSITY/ THE STREET

The public spaces of resistance constituted in the schools and streets of *Mansoura* expanded to the Mediterranean city of Alexandria. Many of the students who studied in the University of Alexandria, particularly the Faculty of Engineering, came from *Mansoura* (Abdalla 1985: 162). The Governor of Alexandria was expecting that schools and universities of Alexandria might be transformed into public spaces of resistance, and hence he called for a meeting with the rector of Alexandria University, the Security Director of Alexandria, five members of staff from Alexandria University, all principals of secondary schools, and some principals of preparatory schools (Al-Ahram 28 Nov. 1968: 3)¹⁷³. In the meeting, the governor stressed the strategic importance of preventing any attempt to transform the street into a public space of resistance. He declared ‘we do not want to control the students’ right of expression; they can hold conferences within the walls of their faculties without taking to the streets’ (Al-Ahram, 28 Nov. 1968: 3). The strategy of the governor and those present in the meeting was first to prevent the transformation of the university

¹⁷³ Ahmed Abdalla (1985) confirms that there was no student representative present in the meeting (p.162).

into a public space of resistance. Accordingly, all university staff members were ordered to be present in the lecture halls five minutes before the lectures' start time. According to the plan, if university staff occupied the lecture halls before the students, and started to teach within the lecture halls, then the latter would not have the chance to discuss the *Mansoura* clashes and express their anger (Ibid: 3), and there would be no place for any resistance discourses. If this failed in stopping the university from turning into a public space of resistance, then they would have no choice but to use all means, including force, to stop this public space of resistance from spreading, particularly to the street.

On the students' side, the news of the bloody clashes in *Mansoura* reached the students of the University of Alexandria, who called for an urgent Students' Union meeting in the evening. Two engineering students, who were in *Mansoura* during the clashes, narrated the violence used by the police against the students, after which the meeting ended with the importance of protesting peacefully to express their rage against the police (Abdalla 1985: 162). On 23 November 1968 resistance against the police was on the rise within the University of Alexandria, and within a few hours the university was transformed into a public space of resistance that was about to explode. The governor's plan to prevent the making of the university into a public space of resistance through starting the lectures early failed, as the engineering students refused to enter lecture halls¹⁷⁴. The students gathered in front of the faculty of engineering where other students joined them, and discussions started to take place on whether to stay within their university and hold a conference or take to the streets (Al-Ahram 28 Nov. 1968: 3). The students held a conference to discuss the events of *Mansoura* and whether they should go in a street demonstration or not, yet according to *Al-Ahram*, the conference was not successful and ended in chaos because various members of the Students' Union were trying to speak at the same time to gain the students' support in the Students' Union elections that were scheduled on 4 December 1968 (Ibid: 3)¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷⁴ According to *Al-Ahram* (28 Nov. 1968: p.3), only the students of engineering refused to enter the lecture halls, while others did. Nevertheless, the strength of the demonstration initiated by the engineering students within a few hours suggests that other students had certainly joined them early on.

¹⁷⁵ The *Al-Ahram* account of the events of Alexandria was meant to undermine the students' decision to go on street demonstrations as being a spontaneous and immature decision.

Regardless of security warnings that demonstrations were banned and would be dispersed by force, students took to the streets using the same tactics they followed in *Mansoura* or in the contentions of February, trying to move from one faculty to another, calling its students to join street demonstrations. According to the Minister of Higher Education, Abdel Wahab al-Borolossi, the demonstration only reached the nearby Faculty of Agriculture, when the clashes commenced between the students and the police in front of the Faculty of Agriculture, given the strict order that street demonstrations were banned (Al-Ahram 3 Dec. 1968: 4). The students tried to break through the police cordon that aimed at containing their resistance discourse from spreading and reaching the city. The President of the Students' Union of the Faculty of Engineering was leading the protests and was trying to force the police to allow the demonstrators to march in the streets of Alexandria and reach the headquarters of the ASU in the city (Ahram, 28 Nov. 1968: 3; Abdallah 1985: 163). The success of the students in marching in the streets of Alexandria to protest against police violence in *Mansoura* would mean that the discourse of resistance was gaining ground and popularity, which would also mean that public spaces of resistance were spreading, threatening the legitimacy of the ruling regime. Accordingly, the demonstrations were dispersed by force and the police arrested the President of the Students' Union of the Faculty of Engineering, Atef El-Shater, along with three students (Abdalla 1985: 163).

The students returned to the building of the Faculty of Engineering and declared a sit-in. The demands of the students during the sit-in had changed, reflecting the developments in their discourse of resistance, developing the public space of resistance constituted within the Faculty of Engineering. The students were primarily protesting against the police violence in *Mansoura*, yet faced with the same violence themselves while they were peacefully trying to march in the streets, the students realised that they were not only protesting against the practices of the police, but rather the discourse of the ruling regime itself. Although Nasser declared his '30 March Manifesto', according to which he promised that the ruling regime would liberalise its political discourse following the contentions of February 1968, the students realised that nothing had actually changed and the ruling regime was as authoritarian as it used to be. The students demanded the release of their fellow students, but also called for the freedom of expression and freedom of the press,

which were raised in February (al-Borolossi 1968, ASU Central Committee Report: 27 Nov: 127)¹⁷⁶.

The governor decided to meet the angry students inside the Faculty of Engineering to decrease the tension (Al-Ahram, 28 Nov. 1968: 3). The governor's decision to visit the sit-in could be compared to Nasser's decision to give his speech on the contentions of February 1968. Nasser decided to address the workers in *Helwan* to confirm the loyalty of the factory, where the protests started, to the ruling regime. Nasser was refuting the fact that the factory, and many other spaces, had been transformed into public spaces that resisted his power. The governor of Alexandria's attempt to meet the students in the place where clashes started could also be seen as an attempt to undermine the public space of resistance constituted within the university. The governor's attempt was not successful; once he entered the Faculty of Engineering the students seized him and locked him up along with the dean of the faculty, in the guards' room, which they completely controlled (Abdalla 1985: 163). The students understood the regime's strategies, and decided to confirm that the Faculty of Engineering was a public space of resistance, where there was no place for the ruling regime and its discourses. The students refused to let go of the governor until their four colleagues, who had been arrested, were released (Ibid: 163).

The sit-in lasted for three days, during which the discourse of resistance within the university was developing, from being against the police practices, into being against the ruling regime, till it turned, for the first time since 1954, against Nasser himself. One of the slogans raised by the students was '*estaqil ya Nasser*' (Nasser resign) (Hussein 1973: 315), and '*Abdel Nasser ya safah, walla zamanak wala w rah*' (Nasser you murderer your time is up) (R. Assad 2012, Pers. Comm. 25 March). The police surrounded the Faculty of Engineering, now defined as the hub of resistance, to isolate it, prohibiting students from entering the faculty to join the sit-in. Confronted with such security measures that sought to isolate and contain the public space of resistance within the Faculty of Engineering, while being determined to spread their discourse of resistance to outside their limited space of the faculty, the engineering students managed to confiscate the faculty's roneo machine and printed thousands of

¹⁷⁶ Moreover, the students demanded the resignation of the Minister of Interior.

pamphlets with their demands, urging students in secondary schools and other faculties, as well as the inhabitants of the city, to adopt their discourse of resistance and take to the streets. These pamphlets were distributed in the evening in the streets of Alexandria, reaching out to a large population (Abdalla 1985: 163). Moreover, the students resorted to the installation of loudspeakers to broadcast statements from inside the faculty, which had directed the attention of passers-by in the street (Borolossi 1968, ASU Central Committee Report, 27 Nov.: 130). Seeing that universities had turned into public spaces of resistance, it was important to reduce the impact of the discourses and practices of the public space of resistance constituted in universities, and hence the cabinet decided to suspend lectures and close universities all over Egypt, and not only in Alexandria (Al-Ahram, 26 Nov. 1968).

The pamphlets paid off at the end as it seemed, and the students managed to spread their discourse of resistance outside the university, allowing other people to transform the street into public spaces of resistance on their behalf. Secondary school students, along with some inhabitants of Alexandria, took to the streets chanting against the ruling regime. According to Rimmah Assad (2012, Pers. Comm., 25 March), the regime used violence as it was not ready to allow the protests to continue in the streets of Alexandria, which openly challenged the legitimacy of the Nasser regime. The protestors replied by burning the icons of the ruling regime's discourse in the streets, from public buses to trams and even ambulances (Al-Ahram, 26 Nov. 1968: 1).

The ruling regime's strategy was to make use of such violent acts to undermine the public spaces of resistance constituted in the University of Alexandria and the streets of the cities. The picture of Alexandria, showing the violence and destruction in the city, would suggest that the streets were not constituted as public space but were rather occupied by thugs and foreign agents who were trying to weaken the legitimacy of the ruling regime (See figure 4).



Figure (4): Acts of violence in an Alexandrian street (particularly the burning of an ambulance) (Al-Ahram 26 Nov. 1968).

Moreover, and in order to demoralise the students' discourses of resistance, *Al-Ahram* stated that the investigations would soon reveal 'The invisible hands behind the incidents of Alexandria' (Al-Ahram 29 Nov. 1968). *Al-Ahram* referred to the students' printing of pamphlets during their occupation of the Faculty of Engineering, and sending such pamphlets to foreign consulates in Alexandria, alluding that foreign countries were behind the events. The students' occupation of the faculty had ended for practical reasons, as there was not enough food for breaking the students' fasting in Ramadan, as well as the strong rains that hit Alexandria (Abdalla 1985: 164), which was different from *Al-Ahram's* claim that the students ended the sit-in because

of their feelings of guilt after the violent events that swept the streets of Alexandria (Al-Ahram 28 Nov. 1968: 3).

It was clear from the previous discussions that the various political actors (the ruling regime, workers, students) were involved in a process of constituting public spaces in moments of contention, which emphasises that public spaces are temporal and cannot be taken for granted.

I have shown how public spaces could gain constitutive power, defining the identities of those occupying them. Both the ruling regime and forces of resistance developed various strategies and techniques to propagate their discourses and limit the discourses of their rivals, something that was also manifested spatially. I have shown how the ruling regime used different strategies to limit the effect of the various discourses of resistance and the public spaces that were constituted as a result were several including: manipulation (as in claiming to lead the demonstration of *Helwan*, or to undermine the students' discourse in Alexandria), dialogue (between the students and the Speaker of the parliament, the governor and the rectors of universities), imprisonment (arresting the leaders of the protests- workers and students), isolating and containing public spaces of resistance (stopping the students from taking to the streets, and subsequently closing the universities and schools for more than a month), violence (police violence against the protestors), and finally altering the discourse of authority propagated by the ruling regime to incorporate some aspects of the discourse of resistance (Nasser's 30 March declaration). On the other hand, the students' (and workers') strategies to constitute public spaces of resistance were also several: demonstrations, sit-ins, printing pamphlets, occupation of universities, taking hostages and setting an internal broadcast.

In the following chapter, I will discuss another pattern of constituting public spaces, which I refer to as the marketisation pattern. This pattern developed during the Sadat era, in which public spaces were constituted according to the market mechanisms and the 'survival of the fittest' rule. Nevertheless, like the monopolisation pattern, resistance emerges from within the marketisation pattern, which is evident in the food riots of 1977.

Chapter 4:

The Marketisation Pattern and the Making of Egyptian Public Spaces under the Sadat Regime

The Street is Ours

*The Street is ours
It is ours alone
And those other people
Standing in their place
They are not part of us*

Salah Jaheen's song 'The Street is Ours' from Youssef Chahine's film 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' 1976

'The Street is ours' is the name of the leading song in Youssef Chanine's film 'The Return of the Prodigal Son'. The film was released in September 1976, less than four months before the food riots that swept Egyptian streets against Sadat's policies and necessitated the intervention of the military to restore order. In his film, Chahine artistically depicts the political contentions that were taking place in Egypt and the whole Arab world after the defeat or the 'setback'¹⁷⁷ of 1967. It was a struggle between what represented primarily a contestation between the discourses of the Nasser regime and those of the Sadat regime, which were manifested spatially. Although Chahine shows the decline and the defeat of the Nasserist discourses, he portrays the determination of the younger generations to stand up for what Nasser represented in terms of social justice, equality, independence and more importantly the political significance of public spaces. The movie tells the story of two brothers, Ali and Tolba. Ali is a socialist who left his village for ten years to pursue his dream of becoming an engineer to help the people of his village. Tolba, by contrast, is a capitalist who runs the family business in the village and exploits everyone around him, including his own family. People in the village await the return of Ali to save

¹⁷⁷ In the Egyptian media, the term *hazima* (defeat) was not used to describe the Egyptian military defeat in the 1967 war; rather the Egyptian political leadership and the Egyptian media alternatively used the term *naksa* (setback).

them from the exploitation of Tolba. After ten years of waiting, Ali returns to the village, yet to the disappointment of everyone, he is defeated, fearful and unable to help anyone, including himself. The only hope for the people of the village is to take to the streets, stressing their ownership rights over the street, seeing that everything else in the village has been sold and bought by Tolba, including the local cinema. The movie ends with a massacre, in which both Ali and Tolba kill each other. Chahine was asked on the motives that pushed him to make the end of the movie dramatic and sad. He replied by saying ‘I was quite frightened, and it was this fear that pushed me to make this film. It was a kind of apprehension I felt I needed to share with my audience. I was fearful that things we had rid ourselves of in our society were now coming back. They (the government) understand ‘openness’ (Sadat’s policies of reintroducing an open economic market system) the same way they wrongfully understood socialism before... Today, ‘openness’ is equally designed for their own benefit, the same way socialism was manipulated earlier! This new (upper) class and those dealers only look after their own interests’ (Khoury 2010: 105).

In the film’s leading song ‘the Street is Ours’, people from different socio-economic backgrounds march in the streets claiming their right in defining those streets while confirming their belongingness to them. The song ends with the appearance of an Egyptian dressed as a cowboy. He ordered the marching ‘masses’ to return to their homes, as there is no place for them in the street. It would not be hard to guess that the Egyptian cowboy is Sadat, who, unlike his predecessor, retreated from Egyptian public spaces. Sadat identified public spaces as a threat, rather than an opportunity, and hence not only did he avoid them, but he also worked hard on de-Nasserising them, which allowed marginalised actors, i.e. Islamists and capitalists, to play a pivotal role in their constitution. Salah Jaheen’s song ‘The Street is Ours’ perfectly captures the resistance to the making of Egyptian public spaces solely by such groups, a resistance which turned violent during the food riots of 1977. It confirms that the making of public spaces is an on-going process that is never fixed and always changing.

In this chapter, I will discuss another pattern of constituting public spaces that developed during the Sadat era, which I will refer to as the marketisation pattern. The chapter will follow the same structure as the previous one. In the first section, I will

investigate political contentions at the beginning of Sadat's rule and the evolution of the marketisation pattern. I will focus on political contentions that were taking place within the ruling regime, particularly after the death of Nasser, between those who wanted to maintain the monopolisation pattern, and those who thought that the monopolisation pattern was no longer valid, especially after the 1967 defeat and the protests of 1968. I will then show the changes in the discourse of the ruling regime and the move away from the monopolisation pattern and the contentions that erupted, as a result, over the making of Egyptian public spaces. Sadat created his discourse of authority from the womb of public spaces of resistance in 1968, just like Nasser's discourse of authority being created from public spaces of resistance against British colonialism. While Sadat was confident that his discourse of authority would be accepted and internalised, discourses of resistance were becoming fully fledged, transforming public spaces into spaces of resistance. Nevertheless, I will show how forces of resistance that were mobilised during the 1968 protests, particularly within the spaces of the university and the factory, were still entrapped within the monopolisation pattern. In their first confrontation with the Sadat regime, the students' of Cairo University were confirming their monopoly over the space of the university. The contentions erupted at Cairo University in January 1972 in response to Sadat's speech in which he declared that the war with Israel to liberate Egyptian occupied territories would be postponed. The students of Cairo University thought that Sadat's speech was the beginning of the formulation of a new anti-war discourse whose aim was to convince Egyptians at large to accept diplomatic non-confrontational settlement with Israel. The students, who had internalised Nasser's Arab nationalist discourse, decided to resist the Sadat regime through occupying Cairo University to undermine the regime's new discourse and to show that such discourse would not be able to dominate public spaces. The contestations spread to the streets and squares of Cairo, most notably *Tahrir* Square, transforming it into a public space of resistance.

In the second section, I will discuss the effects and manifestations of the marketisation pattern, both on the Egyptian public sphere and on the making of Egyptian public spaces, particularly after the declaration of the 'open door economic policies' known as *Infitah* in 1974, which aimed at liberalising the Egyptian economy. Following the contentions of Cairo University and *Tahrir* Square, Sadat identified the

space of the university as a threatening public space. Other public spaces, including the streets and squares, were considered a threat that would undermine Sadat's legitimacy and political power. The threat came from the fact that public spaces were heavily associated with the discourse of the Nasser regime, either in terms of authority or in terms of resistance. This association was apparent in Nasser's historic funeral, where millions of Egyptians marched in the streets to weep for their leader, as if the streets themselves were calling people to pay tribute to the leader. The contentions that erupted in 1972 and the occupation of Cairo University and *Tahrir* Square reflected the impact the monopolisation pattern had on Egyptian public spaces. Although the Sadat regime abandoned the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces, it decided not to allow other actors from monopolising Egyptian public spaces, most notably resistance forces. Accordingly, the Sadat regime adopted the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces, according to which the various political actors competed over public spaces, while the ruling regime guaranteed that none of them would be able to monopolise the process of constituting public spaces. This was embodied in the ruling regime's open door policies in 1974 known as *infitah*. I will show the manifestations of this pattern on the Egyptian public sphere, which started with a process of de-Nasserisation and Islamisation that also reflected on the making of Egyptian public spaces. Such campaigns were important, according to the Sadat regime, to counter the manifestations of the monopolisation pattern that were inherited from the Nasser era and to guarantee that the resistance forces that were mobilised during the contentious episode of 1968 were unable to dominate Egyptian public spaces, posing a threat to the ruling regime.

In the third section, I will investigate the resistance to the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces, which also developed from within and was manifested during the 1977 food riots against the Sadat regime. I will discuss the episode of contention that came in response to such processes of re-defining Egyptian public spaces through the marketisation pattern and which broke out on 18 and 19 January 1977 simultaneously in almost all factories, streets and squares of Egypt. Unlike the previous episodes of contention, protestors aimed at constituting their public spaces of resistance through the use of violence, and through destroying and burning public spaces that reflected the discourse of the ruling authority, which was neo-liberal and consumerist par excellence.

Political Contentions and the Rise of the Marketisation Pattern

The Process of Constituting Egyptian Public Spaces: On the Path of Nasser?

On 28 September 1970 President Gamal Abdel Nasser died from a severe heart attack. Nasser's death came as a shock, not only to those who adored him and saw him as a father, but also to public spaces that he valued and re-defined. In an Egyptian documentary on Nasser's funeral called '*Onshodet Weda*' (Farewell Song) filmed on 5 October 1970, the narrator starts by describing Egypt's sad streets (Onshodet Weda' 1970): 'Egyptian streets (that cheered for Nasser and resisted him in the past) were covered in black; the street advertisements were also covered in black, along with cinemas and theatres'. The pictures of Nasser, in all sizes and shapes, filled the streets, buildings, and shops. Portraits of Nasser were painted on the walls to confirm Nasser's presence in the streets to 'challenge his death' or rather his permanent absence. The repertoire of public spaces developed during the Nasser regime was being reactivated even though Nasser himself was absent. Millions of Egyptians filled the streets chanting 'farewell farewell oh Nasser, the beloved of millions'. They used the streets to express their support for the leader but also anger for his death. During Nasser's funeral, the streets were constituted as public spaces of both authority and resistance. Egyptians filled the streets both to cheer for their leader and show their gratitude and love, yet at the same time they resisted his absence¹⁷⁸. They hugged his pictures and billboards, climbed trees and metros, and tried to hijack the coffin several times. They challenged the presidential guards and police, trying to reach out for a final look or touch to the leader. As Said Aburish (2004)¹⁷⁹ confirms 'the world is unlikely to see anything like it again ... Five million mourners followed his cortege, ... they told his life story in improvised, memorable chants' (p.315). During the funeral, it was not clear whether the people had turned Egyptian public spaces into a solace, or whether the public spaces themselves had turned Egyptians into a weeping crowd, allowing millions of people to cry at the same time. Many of the political activists who participated in the protests against the Nasser regime in 1968 were also

¹⁷⁸ Nasser's sudden and shocking death made it hard for his followers to even think of someone that would be able to take his place. At this stage, they only resisted his absence and not his predecessor. Moreover, there was no clear identification of who would precede Nasser. There was a list of Nasser's strong men that might take his place; ironically Sadat was not even on this list.

¹⁷⁹ Aburish (2004) also quoted Sherrif Hatatta, who was imprisoned during the Nasser regime, who argued that 'Nasser's funeral was his greatest achievement' (p. 315).

marching in the streets to express their sorrow for Nasser's death, regardless of the fact that they were imprisoned and tortured during Nasser's reign. Even poets, who criticised Nasser and wrote poems against him, were also among those who paid tribute to Nasser. The most prominent of these poets was Ahmed Fouad Negm, whose poems were significant in the 1968 protests; he lamented Nasser in a poem, saying '(Nasser) never bows to enemies, no matter how plenty the arrows that hit him, he did miraculous things, but he failed in many other things, he lived and died between us and had our temper, and if he hurt our hearts, all our wounds are healed'¹⁸⁰.

Nasser's death was expected to leave a huge political vacuum (el-Shazly 1980: 91), not only in political institutions but also in the process of constituting public spaces. The repertoire that Egyptian public spaces had gained under the Nasser regime was reflected in Nasser's funeral. The historic funeral of Nasser, with millions of Egyptians taking to the streets mourning their leader, reflected the strength of Nasser's discourse on Egyptian public spaces and the 'repertoire of public spaces' his legacy had accomplished. These streets that had witnessed mass demonstrations to support Nasser and which were defined as 'his' public spaces of authority, had also experienced protests and contentions against the Nasser regime, turning them into public spaces of resistance. Directly following Nasser's death, there were speculations on who would be his successor. Regardless of his position as Vice-President¹⁸¹, Sadat was not close to the decision making process in the last years of Nasser (Hinnebusch 1988: 41)¹⁸². Nasser's strong men were sought to choose a successor. Those who were close to the centre of power and were involved in choosing Nasser's successor included: Ali Sabri, the head of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU); Sha'rawi Gum'a, Minister of the Interior; Sami Sharaf, Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, Mohammed Fawzi, Minister of War and Commander of the Armed Forces, and other leaders of the Arab Socialist Union (Beattie 2000: 40). Sadat's low profile in

¹⁸⁰ Negm 19??, Zeyara l dareh abdel Nasser (A visit to Nasser's Shrine), available online with Negm's voice <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4MVviKQGo4> (Last accessed 25 August 2012).

¹⁸¹ Sadat was also the Speaker of the parliament during the 1968 protests and had a prominent role during these protests.

¹⁸² Roy Essoyan (1970), chief of Associated Press news coverage in the Middle East, wrote that 'experts on the Middle East predict that... four men will be contenders to succeed Egyptian President Nasser... Zakarian Mohieddin, the former vice-president who was named to replace Nasser when he resigned briefly after the 1967 war; Mohammed Sidky Soliman, former prime minister who headed the Aswan Dam project; Lt. Gen. Mohammed Fawzi, commander-in-chief of the Egyptian armed forces and Ali Sabry, head of the Arab Socialist Union, Egypt's only political party', p.1.

governance, along with his rivals' lack of an appealing public image, pushed Nasser's strong men to choose him as a 'puppet' president while they ruled the country from behind the scenes, a calculation that proved mistaken. After agreeing to a 'collective ruling' principle, according to which Sadat was compelled to discuss major issues with members of the ASU before taking any decision¹⁸³, Sadat was sworn in as president and Nasser's successor.

Public spaces represented a challenge to Nasser's successor, who was struggling to confirm his legitimacy as the new leader of the nation. Nasser's strong discourse, with workers and peasants at its centre, coupled with his charismatic personality, all enabled him to successfully constitute public spaces of authority that granted him legitimacy. This had certainly changed with the weakness of the Nasser regime following the defeat of 1967, which led to the rise of public spaces of resistance. In the last chapter, I identified these as the spaces of the factory, *Al-Ahram* headquarters, the university, the school and the street. Unlike his predecessor, Sadat showed little interest in constituting public spaces of authority along the same lines as Nasser, either because he was not willing, or rather not able to¹⁸⁴. Nevertheless, Sadat realised the centrality of 'Nasserism' to both public sphere and public spaces. Accordingly, he stressed the immortality of Nasser and his principles. Publicly, Sadat completely adopted Nasser's discourse; he called Nasser 'the man of liberty, struggle, and resilience' (*Al-Ahram*, 6 Oct. 1970)¹⁸⁵. Moreover, after gaining the nomination of the parliament as a president of the republic, he addressed the parliament by saying 'your nomination to me is a direction for me to pursue the path of Nasser' (*Al-Ahram*, 8 Oct. 1970: 1). *Al-Ahram* newspaper stressed the importance of Nasser's discourse for Sadat's success by highlighting that public's support for Sadat was conditional on his adoption of Nasser's discourse (*Al-Ahram*, 10 Oct. 1970: 1). *Al-Ahram* published a

¹⁸³ As Beattie (2000) discusses, there were five conditions before Sadat was to be formally nominated as president: '1) there would no longer be individual rule, as experienced under Nasser; 2) the Arab Socialist Union ... members were to study all key issues and adopt motions by a majority vote; 3) the *Maglis al-Ummah* (Parliament) was to vote on all major issues; 4) the president was not to assume the duties of the prime minister; and 5) ministers were to take decisions in their own areas of administration' (p. 42-3).

¹⁸⁴ As Hinnebusch (1988) puts it, 'Sadat lacked (Nasser's) charismatic stature with the masses and even had he wished to rule in the style of Nasirite populism, he could never hope to be accepted by (Nasser's) constituency on the same basis as the *Rais* (President); lacking such unchallengeable legitimacy, he could not hope to play a balancing act above the various groups and classes quite as (Nasser) had done' (p. 50).

¹⁸⁵ This was particularly in a meeting with the central executive committee of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) to endorse Sadat's candidacy for the presidency.

picture of thousands of workers marching the streets of Cairo after visiting Nasser's grave, repeating their vow to Nasser and his principles. The workers were on their way to Sadat to support him 'on the path of Nasser' (Al-Ahram, 10 Oct. 1970: 1). Sadat was aware of the spatial repertoire that had developed during the Nasser years. He was aware of the agency Egyptian public spaces had gained and that continued even after the death of Nasser. Sadat never put himself in a confrontational or competitive position with Nasser either in the public sphere or in public spaces, at least publicly. Sadat participated in all memorial events to pay tribute to Nasser. He approved the installation of Nasser's statue in the middle of *Tahrir* Square while naming it Nasser Square (Al-Ahram 15 Oct. 1970). Once in office, Sadat refused to substitute Nasser's picture with his own in government premises, and rather ordered his picture to be placed beside that of Nasser (Ibrahim 2004). With this gesture, Sadat was confirming his loyalty to Nasser. Nevertheless, as Sonallah Ibrahim (2004) illustrates in his inspiring fictional novel *Zaat*, Sadat was essentially leaving the picture of Nasser to fall by itself. This was only possible through weakening the Nasserist effect that had long dominated and monopolised the Egyptian public sphere, something that would have its impact on public spaces.

Regardless of Sadat's public remarks that he would follow the footsteps of Nasser, there was an escalating contention within the ruling regime. Contentions were rising between those who wanted to monopolise political power and sought to retain the monopolisation pattern that developed during Nasser's reign, and those who believed that the monopolisation pattern was no longer valid, especially after the 1967 defeat and the 1968 protests. Nasser's strong men, particularly Ali Sabri and Sha'rawi Gum'a, led the first group. They wanted to retain Nasser's monopoly over political institutions, economic enterprises and cultural production. The second group, on the other hand, was led by Sadat, as well as Heikal, the editor-in-chief of *Al-Ahram* and Nasser's close aide, and Aziz Sidky, Nasser's Minister of Industry¹⁸⁶. Sadat, Heikal and Sedky knew that with the lack of Nasser's charisma it would be hard to maintain the monopolisation pattern as it was during the Nasser reign (see Beattie 2000: 40-42). Between 1970 and 1971, the contestation between the two groups intensified, and reached a dead end in May 1971. On 1 May 1971, the contestation became spatially

¹⁸⁶ Heikal and Aziz Sedky joined the Sadat group against Nasser's strong men as they feared that Ali Sabri and Sha'rawi Gum'a would achieve monopoly over political institutions through the use of force.

manifested. When Sadat was delivering his May Day speech in *Helwan* to the workers, from the same place that Nasser used to deliver his speeches, the workers of *Helwan* cheered for Nasser and raised his portraits (Al-Ahram, 2 May 1971: 1; Beattie 2000: 63). They were reproducing the spatial repertoire that the space of the factory had gained during Nasser's monopolisation pattern and continued regardless of his death¹⁸⁷. Although it was believed that Ali Sabri, the head of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) and the one who was endorsing the continuation of Nasser's monopolisation over all aspects of political life, was behind the mobilisation of the workers in *Helwan* to undermine Sadat's legitimacy, it would be hard to ignore the 'spatial repertoires' that the space of the factory had gained during the Nasser years, and which facilitated the workers' mobilisation.



Figure (5): *Helwan* workers raising pictures of Nasser during the May Day speech delivered by Sadat in *Helwan* on 1 May 1971 (Source: Al-Ahram, 2 May 1971: 3)¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ See figure (5), which shows the *Helwan* workers raising Nasser's portraits.

¹⁸⁸ In figure (5), one female worker appears to be holding Nasser's portrait, cheering for him. It is significant that female workers were participating in political rallies in public spaces, something that Nasser encouraged and which would change with the Islamisation of Egyptian public spaces that started under the Sadat regime, as will be discussed later. Gender and the making of public spaces is an important topic that was discussed in the literature. See, for instance, Valentine (1989) on women's use of space and patriarchy, Hessini (1994) on wearing the *hijab* (veil) in Moroccan society and the imposed distinction between public space and private space, which I discussed in chapter one. Also, see Afsaruddin (1999) on negotiating public spaces and women in Islamic societies, and the work of

Sadat was intimidated by the Nasserisation of Egyptian public spaces that continued regardless of Nasser's death, and which was manifested in *Helwan* during his speech.¹⁸⁹ Sadat realised that the monopolisation pattern that developed during the Nasser era and led to Nasser's hegemony over Egyptian public spaces represented a threat to his rule and legitimacy. Accordingly, Sadat decided to strike back at those who sought to reproduce Nasser's monopolisation pattern, and which was manifested in *Helwan*. On 2 May 1971, only one day after the workers of *Helwan* raised Nasser's portraits during Sadat's May Day speech, Ali Sabri, was stripped of his position as vice-president (Al-Ahram, 3 May 1971: 1; Beattie 2000: 63). Sadat then sought to de-Nasserise and de-monopolise the Egyptian political institutions, as a first step to undermine the monopolisation pattern altogether, as will be discussed later. Along the same path of Nasser, however, Sadat created his own revolution. On 15 May 1971, he declared the 'Corrective Revolution' against 'disloyal' politicians who represented the remaining sources of Nasserist discourse in state institutions and whom he called the 'centres of power' (*Marakez al-Qiwa*)¹⁹⁰. Sadat's main aim was to dismantle these 'centres of power' that sought to monopolise the Egyptian political scene, hindering him from undertaking his legal duties as president of Egypt (Al-Ahram, 16 May 1971: 1, 3-6).

In chapter three, I discussed the attempt on Nasser's life in *Manshiyyah* to show the political contentions that were taking place at the beginning of Nasser's rule, and which significantly contributed to the development of the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces. In this chapter, I will focus on the students' protests at Cairo University, which also extended to *Tahrir* Square, to show two things. First, to show the political contentions that were taking place at the beginning of Sadat's rule in order to understand the development of the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces, especially within the space of the university. It is important to note that this process of constituting public spaces is an on-going process that is never fixed nor closed. The making of public spaces is intertwined with political contentions,

Ghannam (1997, 2006) and Singerman (1995).

¹⁸⁹ According to Beattie (2000), Sadat was furious at the *Helwan* incident and told one of his advisors that he would 'hang' the power centres, as he believed that they were responsible for such an incident that was meant to undermine his authority and control over public space (p.63).

¹⁹⁰ These included Ali Sabri, Sami Sharaf, Sha'rawi Gum'a, and Mohamed Fawzi.

which are continuous and endless. Second, I want to show that the students who were mobilised under the Nasser regime and who participated in the protests of 1968, were reproducing the monopolisation pattern in constituting public spaces of resistance, in which leftist and Nasserist students were dominating Cairo University, spreading their discourses and undermining other discourses, specially Islamist ones, which were on the rise since the defeat of 1967. I will then show how the Sadat regime sought to undermine the monopoly of leftist and Nasserist students over the space of the university through opening up the process of constituting public spaces to the emerging Islamist students, which would have effects beyond the space of the university. I refer to this process as the marketisation of Egyptian public spaces, which developed under the Sadat regime.

The Twilight of Monopolisation Pattern and the Seeds for Marketising Public Spaces: Cairo University and Tahrir Square

Following the contentions of November 1968, which were discussed in the previous chapter, the tone of resistance to the ruling regime had calmed relatively, given the Nasser regime's adoption of a patriotic war discourse. The making of public spaces that resisted the ruling regime had diminished in the face of Nasser's motto "*La Sawt ya'lo fawq sawt alma'raka*" (No voice rises higher than the voice of the battle), referring to discourses of resistance to the ruling regime¹⁹¹. In order to strengthen the regime's discourse, various operations against the Israeli army took place and on 8 March 1969 Nasser officially declared the beginning of the War of Attrition against Israel. Indeed, this discourse was strong enough to weaken attempts to constitute public spaces of resistance against the ruling regime but not to prevent them. As Nasser repeated on various occasions, the war discourse, adopted by the regime, had been endorsed by the people on 9 and 10 June 1967, when they filled the streets of Egypt raising the pictures of Nasser with slogans '*hanhareb*' (we will fight), transforming these streets into public spaces of authority. The war discourse adopted by the Nasser regime manifested itself in his famous statement 'whatever was taken by force, should be returned by force', with practices on the ground that reflected it,

¹⁹¹ Following the 1967 defeat, Egyptians used political satire to express their political views against the ruling regime. Political jokes spread to the extent that Nasser asked Egyptians in a public speech not to make jokes about the Egyptian army.

and which would at least reduce the attempts of constituting public spaces of resistance, most notably within the university.

With Sadat's rise to power, after the death of Nasser, the dominant discourse of war continued and Sadat promised that the year of 1971 would be the 'decisive year' for liberating the Egyptian territories occupied by Israel. Sadat's discourse grew in deviation from that of the Nasser regime, especially following his 'corrective revolution' against Nasser's strong men, which he called 'centres of power'. Sadat's success over the monopolisation camp within the ruling regime gave him the freedom to shape a political discourse that was significantly different from that of his predecessor. Without posing any criticisms to Nasser himself, Sadat started picking up on the weak points in Nasser's discourse, most notably its authoritarian, non-democratic credentials, to formulate a new discourse for the ruling regime. Sadat declared a closure of political prisons that had dominated the political scene under Nasser. He released 65 students who had participated in the contentions of 1968 (Beattie 2000: 96). More importantly in August 1971, Sadat declared the removal of university guards from university campuses (Beattie 2000: 98). Sadat's decision to remove the presence of police within the university campuses paved the way for the making of the university as a public space of resistance during the contentions of January 1972.

According to Abdalla (1985), who himself was an active participant in Students activism within Cairo University, particularly the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, there were three forms of media for political activism within the university: the first was the wall-magazines, the second was student societies and the third was student conferences. The wall-magazines were meant to create an alternative public sphere to that which was controlled by the ruling regime. As Ahmed Bahaa Shabaan stresses, 'the wall-magazines (of the universities) were the only free press in Egypt' (Shabaan 2011, Pers. Comm., 20 April). Nevertheless, the very fact that these magazines were being shown on the walls of the university in specific visible physical spaces reflected the spatial impact of such wall-magazines. They were meant to confirm the identity of the space of the university and constitute it into a public space of resistance. Ahmed Bahaa Shabaan and Moataz El-Hefnawy, who were both politically active at the universities of Cairo and Ain Shams respectively, stress that

students 'claimed to themselves the right to publish wall-magazines at university without getting a permission from the authorities of the university' (A. Shabaan 2011, Pers. Comm., 20 April)¹⁹². The Minister of Justice confirmed the students' monopoly over the wall-magazines in his report on the 1972 contentions presented to the members of Arab Socialist Union (ASU), Egypt's only political party at the time. He argued that 'the students started publishing a number of wall-magazines which were characterised of being violent and of stirring unrest without gaining the permission from the university authority' (Arab Socialist Union 1972, Minutes of the Second National Congress, 17 Feb.).¹⁹³

Although the students did not gain permissions from the university authorities, or those responsible for controlling the space of the university, they were still able to publish their wall-magazines. They were granted permission, not from the university authorities, but from the space of the university itself. They challenged the spatial agency of the university that it gained during the Nasser regime. They capitalised on the political performances that took place during the 1968 protests and which transformed the university into a space of dissent. I have shown in the previous chapter that although the students were resisting the Nasser regime and the monopolisation pattern, they sought to monopolise the space of the university. Since the contentions of 1968, university students, particularly those who were mobilised under the Nasser regime and held leftist views, were enhancing their domination over the space of the university. The wall-magazines were influential in this regard. They were quite diverse though, covering political issues, as well as socio-economic problems. They also used various styles and techniques including articles, paintings, caricatures, poetry and jokes (Shabaan 2011, Pers. Comm., 20 April). The dominant theme amongst these wall-magazines was the liberation of the Egyptian occupied territories after the 1967 war and the liberalisation of the political sphere (Abdalla 1985: 176).

¹⁹² Also (M. El-Hefnawy 2011, Pers. Comm., Feb.)

¹⁹³ Mohamed Salama was the Minister of Justice at the time. He was presenting investigation results to the members of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU), in the presence of Sadat, during the Second National Congress. A copy of the meeting minutes was obtained from the archive of the leftist Tagamo' Party in Egypt.

The contentions started when Sadat delivered his famous speech on 13 January 1972, in which he declared that he was not able to take the war decision in 1971, 'the decisive year', as promised because of the eruption of the Indo-Pakistani war. Sadat argued that this war resulted in a 'fog' that would hinder Egypt's war against Israel (Al-Ahram, 14 Jan. 1972). The students refuted Sadat's 'fog speech' and saw it as a deviation from Nasser's anti-imperialist discourse. On the day following the speech, students at the Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Economics and Political Science discussed Sadat's speech and decided to express their refusal of his new discourse of authority. The wall-magazines spread all over the university, and they were all criticising Sadat's hesitation to go to war with Israel to liberate Egyptian occupied territories, and called for a meeting on 17 January 1972 to discuss further actions (Abdalla 1985: 178-9). The students realised that their wall-magazines were limited to the space of the university and they wanted their public space of resistance to go beyond the university to have a stronger impact on the ruling regime and its discourse of authority. Accordingly, the students met on 17 January at various faculties of Cairo University, most notably the Faculty of Engineering, with its strong political group 'the Society of the Supporters of the Palestinian Revolution (SSPR)', and the Faculty of Economics and Political Science. The students drafted their demands as follows: 1) arm the public to participate in the war with Israel, 2) reject all peaceful settlements with Israel, 3) allow students to volunteer in the armed forces, and 4) lift all restrictions on student activities.

On 19 January, the students of the Faculty of Engineering called for a conference with the title 'Discussing the preparation of the internal front for war' (Assad 1987: 59). Dr. Kamal abul Magd, the ASU youth secretary, was invited to the conference to answer the students' questions during the conference (Shabaan 1977). When Abul Magd failed to answer most of the questions and justified that by telling the students that he was just a 'postman', the students were outraged. Maha Sabri, a leftist political activist who was an engineering student, told Abul Magd that she would stay at the university until Sadat himself came to the university and answered their questions (A. Shabaan 2011, Pers. Comm., 20 April). Many students sympathised with such a call. After conducting numerous conferences and meetings in various faculties, most notably the Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Economics and Political Science, the students decided to unify their efforts, as they shared the same discourse of

resistance. Accordingly, the students called for an inter-university meeting on 20 January 1972. Like the contentions of November 1968, the students confiscated the faculty's roneo machine and printed hundreds of pamphlets with their demands and a call for an inter-university meeting (Assad 1987: 59).

The students decided to occupy the biggest hall at Cairo University, named 'Gamal Abdel Nasser Hall' after Nasser's death. During their occupation of this hall, which started on 20 January 1972, the students were keen to expand their public space of resistance against the ruling regime. They started writing more wall-magazines, conferring agency on the space of the university. Spatial agency should not give the impression that the space of the university is rigid and static, and that we can only think of one form of public space that could be established within the university. On the contrary, it is this dynamism between the spatial agency and political contentions that leads to the making of public spaces within the university that are temporary, changing and unsettled.

The students did not take the space of the university for granted. They struggled with its physical settings and altered its spatial agency. During the contentions of January 1972, the students not only placed the wall-magazines on the internal walls of the university, but also they placed them on the external walls of the university, which made them available to the public of the street and not only the students within the university (ASU 1972, Minutes of the Second National Congress, 17 Feb.). Moreover, the students placed the wall-magazines on the ground in front of the university to reach more people, and placed a huge banner in front of the main gate of Cairo University with 'Long Live Egypt... the protesting students' written on it (Assad 1987: 59). Through these actions, the students challenged the limits imposed on them by the walls of the space of the university. The contentions between the students' discourses of resistance versus the ruling regime's discourse of authority compromised and negotiated the spatial agency of the university to constitute public spaces that reflected their discourses and hegemonies over the others. It was this dynamism between political contentions and the agency of the space of the university that led to the constitution of public space of resistance that exceeded the space of the university.

The making of the university into a public space of resistance followed a series of confrontations between the students and the Sadat regime. The students built heavily on the repertoire of contentions developed during the contentions of 1968, and the repertoire of public spaces that advanced. They started the protests at the Faculty of Engineering, moved to the largest hall at Cairo University, and secured their public space of resistance, barring regime representatives from entering. The students formed the Higher National Committee of Cairo University Students (HNCCUS) that included representatives from the various faculties of Cairo University (Abdalla 1985: 180). The committee decided to continue the occupation of 'Gamal Abdel Nasser Hall', demanding that Sadat visit them and respond to their questions and demands (A. Shabaan 2011, Pers. Comm., 20 Apr.). The students' demands were centred on refusing all peaceful settlement with Israel and democratising the Egyptian political system. The demands were drafted into a 'student proclamation' (Abdalla 1985: 180) and were perfectly captured in the students' slogan at the time, which was initiated by Ahmed Abdalla, '*Kol al-demokratiyyah lel sha'b, kol al-tafany lel watan*' (All Democracy to the People, All Sacrifices to the Nation) (Shabaan 1977).

It is important to note, however, that the students I am referring to, who played a significant role in the contentions of Cairo University in 1972 and who mobilised the majority of the student body within the university, were leftist and Nasserist students. Islamist students, who increased in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat, were marginalised within the university. Wael Uthman (2006), an Islamist student at the Faculty of Engineering during the 1970s, argues that 'communists' were dominating political activities at Cairo University, blocking other non-communist students from participating. To illustrate the leftist students' domination over Cairo University, Wael Uthman made an analogy between Nasser's monopolisation over Egyptian public spaces, and the leftist students' monopolisation over the space of the university, and 'Gamal Abdel Nasser Hall' in particular, during the occupation of Cairo University. He says 'On 20 January, the students' conference was held at Cairo University, where members of the Higher National Committee of Cairo University Students (HNCCUS) occupied the stage and chose their president [Ahmed Abdalla], who started to deliver his speech. It was such a funny scene; the President [Ahmed Abdalla] delivered his speech with the rest of the HNCCUS members behind him, just

like the ruler [Nasser] used to deliver his speeches with ministers and political advisers behind him' (Uthman 2006: 65).¹⁹⁴

The students' occupation of 'Gamal Abdel Nasser Hall' at Cairo University lasted for four days, and extended to Ain Shams University (Abdalla 1985: 181). The dynamics between the discourses of resistance and those of authority continued during the four days and after. Members of the Higher National Committee of Cairo University Students (HNCCUS) met with members of parliament to present their demands, drafted in a 'student proclamation' (Abdalla 1985: 180). The students demanded their 'proclamation' to be published in the press. The students' demand was significant in that it aimed at expanding the discourse of resistance to the public sphere and hence sought to undermine the ruling regime's discourse of authority. The students were using their occupation of the university, defining it as a public space of resistance to influence the public sphere dominated by the ruling regime. Sadat's response was also playing on the dynamics between public spaces and the public sphere. He aimed at undermining the students' power base, namely their occupation of Cairo University, and the making of the university as a public space of resistance. Accordingly, Sadat announced that he accepted the invitation he received from the students of Alexandria, who declared their support for him, criticising the occupation of Cairo University (Assad 1987: 63). Sadat was undermining the students' public spaces of resistance constituted at Cairo University by supporting the making of public spaces of authority within Alexandria University. In response, the students of Cairo University decided to continue their occupation of the 'Gamal Abdel Nasser Hall' and declared that they would go on street demonstrations to expand their public space of resistance. Nevertheless, and before the students expanded their resistance to the street, police forces invaded Cairo University campus for the first time in Egypt's history and arrested all students who were participating in the sit-in (A. Shabaan 2011, Pers. Comm. 20 Apr.). The University was also announced closed and the mid-year vacation was brought forward by one week (Assad 1987: 63).

¹⁹⁴ Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh (2012), another Islamist student during the 1970s, also refers to the monopoly of leftist and Nasserist students over the university. He mentions their domination of the Students' Union, and their hegemonic wall-magazines, in which they criticised Islam (p.28).

Nevertheless, the regime's attempts to prevent the expansion of discourses of resistance from the university to the street through invading the university and closing it failed significantly. Once fellow students knew of the arrest of their colleagues, they marched the streets of Cairo and *Helwan* chanting against Sadat and distributing pamphlets that criticised his regime. Whilst the university was closed, the students decided to occupy *Tahrir* Square in downtown Cairo. The students were joined by members of the public, journalists, artists, poets and workers. The protesters put barricades in *Tahrir* Square to strengthen the process of re-defining *Tahrir* Square as a public space of resistance. Moreover, they raised anti-Sadat banners in different places of the square and used the ads' wooden stands to place their anti-regime slogans (ASU 1972, Minutes of the Second National Congress, 17 Feb.). Like the university, however, the protesters' occupation of *Tahrir* Square was forcefully brought to a halt and 61 protesters were arrested.

Understanding the political salience of public space, Sadat ordered the release of the arrested students. Nevertheless, he stressed that the university is a sacred space for learning, and it should not be used for political activities. The process of constituting public spaces of resistance within the university did not stop and at the end of 1972 and the beginning of 1973, contentions erupted again and were faced by the ruling regime's strong fist. Sadat understood that the use of force against protesters was short lived beside its contradiction with his discourse of authority that was being propagated as one of political freedom and personal liberty. Accordingly, Sadat made extensive efforts to turn public spaces of resistance constituted in the university into public spaces of authority through marketising the process of constituting public spaces. In other words, the Sadat regime undermined the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces through empowering those who were marginalised under the Nasser regime, most notably the Islamists, to play a significant role in the making of Egyptian public spaces. In the following sections, I will discuss the effects and manifestations of Sadat's marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces, which was intertwined with a de-Nasserisation and Islamisation of the Egyptian public sphere.

Effects and Manifestations of the Marketisation Pattern

Infitah, De-Nasserisation and Islamisation: Different Faces of the Same Marketisation Coin?

On 6 October 1973, the Egyptian army initiated a surprise attack against Israeli troops in Sinai, subsequently leading to the success of Egyptian forces in crossing the Suez Canal. Although the October war had significant implications on the politics of the Middle East, it had great repercussions on political contentions in Egypt, and the struggle over the making of public spaces. After the 1973 war, in which Egypt restored its sovereignty over most of Sinai, Sadat's discourse started to take shape. He was named the 'Hero of the Crossing' and presented himself as the one who restored Egyptian dignity and liberated the Egyptian territories that were occupied after the 1967 war during Nasser's era. Accordingly, Sadat was confident enough to articulate a discourse of authority that completely deviated from his predecessor, or even being hostile to him. A process of a de-Nasserisation of the Egyptian public sphere was initiated. It started even before the October war. The process of de-Nasserisation could be traced back to Sadat's release of political prisoners after his 'corrective revolution' in 1971. Al-Musawwar, a weekly magazine, conducted a number of interviews with released political prisoners who narrated their experiences under the Nasser regime (Cull et al. 2003: 18). After the October war, the de-Nasserisation campaign intensified and as Peter Mansfield puts it:

For the first time in twenty-two years, articles appeared in the Egyptian press attacking the Nasserist revolution in all its aspects and even defending the ancient regime and the monarchy. There was talk of selling off the nationalized industries to the private sector, dismantling the Arab Socialist Union and restoring political parties. 'Could de-Nasserisation go further than this? (Mansfield, quoted in Roy Armes 1987: 249)

Peter Mansfield (1978) narrated one of Egypt's famous political jokes at the time, which reflect Sadat's de-Nasserisation. When Sadat was in his car with the driver, the driver asked him which way to go because of the traffic. Sadat inquired from the driver on the path that Nasser usually took in such circumstances. The driver replied by saying that Nasser used to take the left path. Sadat ordered the driver to 'signal left and turn right'. The joke was not detached from reality. Sadat did turn right and in 1974, he declared his post-war 'open-door' economic policies, which became widely

known as '*Infitah*'.¹⁹⁵ As Galal Amin (2000) puts it: '*(Infitah)* is usually understood to mean three things: the opening of virtually all doors to importation of foreign goods and capital, the removal of restrictions on Egyptian local investment, and the gradual withdrawal of the state from an active role in the economy' (p.9). In other words, the *Infitah* aimed at privatising and marketising the Egyptian economy.

According to Ayubi (1991b), the Sadat regime's adoption of *Infitah* was the outcome of changes that were taking place domestically, regionally, and internationally. Ayubi highlights that on the domestic level, *Infitah* came in response to the failure of Nasser's economic model in achieving significant development.¹⁹⁶ On the regional front, the boom in the oil prices and the speedy transformation in the economies of the oil rich gulf countries stimulated the belief that Arab aid and investments might be directed to the Egyptian market. Finally, on the international level, the confrontation between the USA and the USSR over control in the Middle East was expected to benefit the Egyptian economy, where both superpowers would compete to offer aid to Egypt in order to have greater influence in the Middle East (p.3-4). The *Infitah*, with its emphasis on privatisation and marketisation, had turned Egypt from the Eastern socialist camp to the Western capitalist camp, or what Abdel-Khalek (1982) describes as the 'reintegration of the Egyptian economy into the network of the world capitalist market' (p.260). *Infitah* dominated political and economic discussions both in the press and on television. It was portrayed as the 'magical' economic policy that would bring prosperity to all Egyptians. Sadat himself illustrated on various occasions that every Egyptian would have 'a car and a villa with cold and hot water' (Sadat, quoted in Shabaan 2009: 23).¹⁹⁷ *Infitah*, literally meaning opening up, represented the opposite of Nasser's monopolisation policies. According to *Infitah*, the Egyptian economy should be regulated according to market mechanisms of supply and demand. Although *Infitah* primarily referred to a set of economic policies to liberalise the

¹⁹⁵ *Infitah* was declared in what was known as *Waraqat 'Uktubar* (the October Paper), published by Arab Republic of Egypt, Maslahat al-Isti'amat, April 1974.

¹⁹⁶ Ayubi (1991b) called Nasser's economic model 'Socialism without socialists', in which Nasser counted heavily on managers and technocrats, who were not necessary sympathisers to socialism, to implement socialist policies (See Hinnebusch 1988: 31). The Egyptian economy under the Nasser regime was closer to a 'state capitalist' economy.

¹⁹⁷ In my interview with Gamil Mattar, a prominent Egyptian journalist who witnessed the transformation in the editorial line of Egyptian newspapers under the Sadat regime, he told me that the journalists were asked to emphasise in their articles the prosperity that *Infitah* would bring. (G. Mattar 2011, Pers. Comm. March).

Egyptian economy, it functioned as the new discourse of authority of the ruling regime, which had significant socio-political implications that generated contentions and altered the process of constituting Egyptian public spaces, as will be discussed.

Infitah did not only lead to the marketisation of the Egyptian economy, but also to the marketisation of Egyptian public spaces. The Sadat regime was not willing, or rather not able, to monopolise the process of constituting public spaces as was the case under the Nasser regime. Alternatively, the Sadat regime allowed the various political actors to compete over defining and re-defining Egyptian public spaces, while distancing itself, at least publicly, from such a struggle. However, in order to allow for such marketisation of Egyptian public spaces, it was important to undermine any remaining manifestations of the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces, which was very prominent during the contentions of 1972 at Cairo University and Tahrir Square, as discussed earlier. Accordingly, the process of de-monopolising and marketising Egyptian public spaces was achieved through a process of de-Nassersing, Islamising and commercialising Egyptian public spaces. Such a process started in the Egyptian public sphere and had its manifestations on the making of Egyptian public spaces. While the Nasser regime monopolised political discourses of the public sphere in order to monopolise Egyptian public spaces, the Sadat regime allowed various political discourses to compete in the Egyptian public sphere, which also had its implications on re-defining Egyptian public spaces. Nevertheless, the marketisation of the Egyptian public sphere was not without restrictions. It was not the Habermasian ideal public sphere; it had its own inclusionary and exclusionary rules. The Egyptian public sphere during Sadat granted un-restricted access to anti-Nasser discourses while containing those that sympathised with the Nasser regime's discourse.

Sadat started a public discussion on Nasser's discourse of authority, which dominated the Egyptian public sphere between 1974 and 1975 (Hinnebusch 1988). The discussion turned into a campaign against the Nasser regime's discourse and subsequently turned against Nasser himself. Although Sadat publicly distanced himself from anti-Nasser discussions, he allowed them to dominate the public sphere, while blocking pro-Nasser discourses from rising. Mohamed Hassanein Heikal (1987), who was a close friend of Nasser and the editor-in-chief of *Al-Ahram*, was removed from his position in *Al-Ahram* and was banned from publishing books in

Egypt. In response to the de-Nasserisation campaign and the ban on his books in Egypt, Heikal published his book *'l-Misr la l-'abdel Nasser'* (For Egypt and not to Nasser) in 1976 in Beirut, in which he responded to false accusations against Nasser, highlighting the link between Sadat and the de-Nasserisation campaign. Hassanein Karoum (1983) was another Nasserist journalist who had to publish his book in 1975 on the 'de-Nasserisation campaign' and his response to it from outside Egypt. The Egyptian public sphere during the Sadat era was hostile to any pro-Nasser discourses. Even the movie industry, that had long supported the Nasser regime and his discourse, was being de-Nasserised. Movies that focused on censorship, torture and political oppression during the Nasser era flourished, like *al-Karnak* that was released in 1975.

The de-Nasserisation campaign was directed towards four aspects of Nasserism: 1) monopolisation over political institutions, public sphere and public spaces, 2) economic socialist policies and their discursive and spatial manifestations, 3) foreign policy and pan-Arabism, and 4) Nasser's supporters and his political constituency¹⁹⁸. As Hinnebusch (1988) highlights 'the de-Nasserisation campaign accomplished its objective, a considerable strengthening in Sadat's personal power position' (p.61). Sadat's discourse of authority was being formulated as a discourse of resistance to Nasser's discourse of authority. Accordingly, if Nasser's discourse of authority was focusing on the Arab nationalism, socialism, and anti-colonialism, then Sadat's discourse was one of Egyptianism (represented in his Egypt first principle), capitalism and Westernism, or more precisely Americanism. The de-Nasserisation of the public sphere was a *raison d'être* for Sadat's discourse of authority. Nevertheless, a process of Sadatisation of the public sphere needed to be accompanied by a strong process of Islamisation of the public sphere, to counter the strong impact Nasser had had on the Egyptian public sphere. Mona Abaza (2006b) illustrates the rise of Islamist preachers and their domination over the Egyptian public sphere as being a political phenomenon. She rightly describes the rise of Moustafa Mahmoud, a communist who turned Islamist, and the importance of his discourse to serve Sadat's objectives of de-Nasserising the Egyptian public sphere. Mahmoud had a televised weekly programme known as 'Science and Faith', the same slogan that Sadat adopted for his new project

¹⁹⁸ For further details on the de-Nasserisation campaign, see Awad (1987), Karoum (1983), Heikal (1983; 1987). There were other books that contributed to the de-Nasserisation campaign, criticising the Nasser era, most notably Tawfiq al-Hakim's (1974) book *'Awdet al-wa'iy* (The Return of Consciousness).

for Egypt. He published numerous books that turned into best sellers. Sheikh Sharawi was another popular Islamist preacher whose books, programmes and articles dominated Egyptian debates. He was very close to Sadat and shared with him the hard feelings toward Nasser, to the extent that Sha'rawi declared publicly that he thanked God that Egypt was defeated in the 1967 war against Israel because the Egyptian leadership at the time (Nasser) was communist.

In the following section, I will show the impact of this structural transformation of the Egyptian public sphere on the constitution of public spaces under the Sadat regime. The de-Nasserisation campaign was not only directed to the public sphere but had impacted the Egyptian public spaces immensely. In the following section, I will particularly focus on the Islamisation of Egyptian public spaces under the Sadat regime, as well as their commercialisation, which came as a result of the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces.

Adieu to Nasser's Public Spaces? The De-Nasserisation Manifested Spatially

*This is what happened, this is fate and this is destiny
We say goodbye to the past and its big dreams
We say goodbye to the good times and goodbye to the ghosts
What's gone is gone and now there are only a few steps left
The only thing we can do, my friend, is when we part ways
We can look forward to the sun of our dreams
And enjoy looking at it steadfastly through the thick clouds*

Salah Jaheen's lyrics from Youssef Chahine's film 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' released in September 1976¹⁹⁹

The historic funeral of Nasser reflected the association of Egyptian public spaces with Nasser; an association that represented a threat to Nasser's successor as discussed earlier. While Nasser presented his discourse of authority as one of resistance to colonialism, Sadat presented his discourse of authority as one of resistance to Nasser,

¹⁹⁹ Translation from Khouri 2010, p. 105

in order to prevent the making of public spaces of resistance. He dropped the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces, either because he was unwilling or rather unable to. With the introduction of the *Infitah* policies, the Sadat regime started to de-Nasserise and de-monopolise Egyptian public spaces. Although Sadat did acknowledge the threats to his rule posed by public spaces, he was less interested in being directly involved in shaping them.

Sadat's suspicion of public spaces was evident in his ruling style, which was significantly different from his predecessor's. He delivered his speeches at the parliament, where he served as its speaker and not in the streets and squares as Nasser had done.²⁰⁰ While Nasser was considered a populist leader, who depended heavily on public spaces, Sadat confirmed on various occasions that his aim was to establish an 'institutional state'. Unlike Nasser who was famous for touring the streets of Egypt in his open car without fearing public spaces, Sadat used a helicopter for the shortest journeys, even those that would only take five minutes by car (Hirst 1981: 213).²⁰¹ While Nasser considered it the state's task to constitute public spaces of authority that served the discourse of the ruling regime, Sadat retreated from the direct role of constituting public spaces. In the previous section, I discussed the de-Nasserisation of the Egyptian public sphere; in this section, I will discuss the manifestations of this de-Nasserisation process on the making of Egyptian public spaces. I argue that the Sadat regime sought to de-Nasserise Egyptian public spaces in order to legitimise its own political discourse, with *Infitah* at the heart of it. In doing so, Sadat undermined the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces that developed under the Nasser regime, and engineered a process of marketising Egyptian public spaces through allowing Islamisation and commercialisation processes in playing a significant role in re-defining Egyptian public spaces. It should be noted, however, that although Sadat sought to prevent the emergence of public spaces of resistance through marketising Egyptian public spaces, he failed to foresee the resistance that was embedded within the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces. As Hinnebusch (1988) puts it, 'Sadat sought to adapt the authoritarian state to the growing social and ideological

²⁰⁰ Ahmed Bahaa al-Din, one of Sadat's close advisors until 1976, argues that he felt that Sadat hated Cairo and thought that Cairo was against him, and that he was trying hard to avoid being in Cairo or use its streets and squares (Bahaa al-Din 1987: 41-2).

²⁰¹ At the end of his reign, Sadat's engagement with the public was confined to a radio dialogue between him and a young Egyptian anchor whom he called '*Hemat ya benty*' (My daughter Hemat).

pluralisation of the political arena' (p.70), which he participated in creating and which was spatially manifested.

The process of Islamising Egyptian public spaces, which was aimed to undermine the monopolisation of the leftists and Nasserists of public spaces and hence pave the way for the marketisation pattern, started within the space of the university. As discussed earlier, Sadat's legitimacy was challenged by the students' occupation of Cairo University in 1972. Leftist students, who were mobilised under the Nasser regime but also participated in the protests of 1968, dominated political discourses within the university, which Sadat sought to undermine. In fact, Sadat was not the only one that sought to undermine the leftist students' monopolisation over the university, emerging Islamists were also eager to weaken 'communist and leftist presence at the university' (Uthman 2006: 63). According to Wael Uthman (2006), an Islamist student at Cairo University during the 1970s, leftist and communist students were monopolising the university with their libertine wall-magazines and well organised structures that spread in all Egyptian universities. Uthman (2006) stresses that at the time, he was 'willing to cooperate with the devil to protect Egypt from communism' (p.63). Islamist activities started within the university in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat. Nevertheless, such activities were apolitical and purely religious. Directly following the contentions of Cairo University, the Sadat regime approached Islamist students within the university to cooperate with them against the growing influence of leftist students. On 1 February 1972, less than one week after the police stormed Cairo University to bring the students' occupation to a halt, Mohamed Uthman Ismail, the secretary of the Arab Socialist Union, met with Wael Uthman and another Islamist student and offered them 10,000 EGP to expand their Islamist activities within the university (Uthman 2006: 104). Although Uthman emphasises that they rejected the offer, he did not deny that other Islamist students might have benefited from similar offers offered by the Sadat regime. Kamal Khalil, a leftist student during the 1970s, illustrates how Islamists students were tearing all wall-magazines written by leftist students.²⁰² Moreover, Islamist students started to undermine the leftist students'

²⁰² See Kamal Khalil (2010)'s detailed illustration of Islamist students' tactics during the 1970s, available from his blog http://3eyonelkalam.blogspot.com/2010/02/blog-post_19.html (Last Accessed 10 April 2012). Regardless of Wael Uthman's denial that the Islamist group 'Jama'et Shabab al-Islam' [Islamic Youth Group] that he founded in November 1972 did not cooperate with the Sadat regime, both Kamal Khalil (2010) and Aboul Fotouh (2012) disagree.

monopoly of the space of the university through occupying lecture halls. Aboul Fotouh (2012), who was one of the founders of *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah* at Cairo University, explains that Islamist students used to occupy lecture halls where musical concerts were to be held and read the Quran, an action which led to the cancellation of various concerts and parties organised by non-Islamist students (p.52).²⁰³ On the other hand, Islamist symbols were spreading within the university, with more female students putting on the *hijab* (veil) and male students growing their beards and wearing the traditional *Jilbab*. Gender segregated spaces started to appear, where male students were not allowed to talk to female students 'even if they were talking about Islam' (Aboul Fotouh 2012: 55).

Islamists argued that Sadat did not grant them an advantaged position in Egyptian universities. They rather argued that Sadat liberalised Egyptian universities from the monopolisation of leftist and Nasserist influences. They emphasised that the space of the university was open to everyone, but with the failure of Nasserism, which was manifested in the 1967 defeat, Islamists were able to dominate Egyptian universities during the 1970s. Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, argued that 'Sadat did not open the university to Islamist forces only, he opened it to everyone but Islamists were stronger and hence they dominated' (Aboul Fotouh 2010, Pers. Comm. June). In other words, Islamists were reiterating Sadat's marketisation of the public spaces, in which they appeared victorious or according to the language of the market, 'the fittest to survive'. Whether Sadat played a role in the rapid growth of Islamist discourse and practices in Egyptian universities or did not, it was apparent that the rise of Islamism had undermined the process of constituting the university into a public space of resistance that could challenge the ruling regime. The unchallenged growth of Islamist movements and the gradual increase in their power altered the university's spatial routines and led to the production of apolitical identities, which benefited the Sadat regime.

The manifestations of the Islamisation of Egyptian public spaces, as a result of the marketisation of Egyptian public spaces under the Sadat regime, were not confined to the space of the university. While Nasser was concerned with building new factories,

²⁰³ In other instance, as Aboul Fotouh narrates, Islamist students used violence to cancel musical concerts within Cairo University.

seeing that his discourse of authority was centred on workers and social equality, Sadat allowed an unprecedented expansion in the building of mosques (Esposito 1998: 236). According to Ansari (1984), there was a rise in private (*ahli*) mosques that were not under the direct supervision of the state²⁰⁴. At the beginning of Sadat's era in 1970, the number of private mosques was 20,000 increasing to more than 46,000 by the end of his rule in 1980 (Ansari 1984: 129).²⁰⁵ Industrialisation declined from constituting 20.4% of the GDP at the beginning of the 1970s, to only constituting 18% in 1975 (Saad Eddin Ibrahim, quoted in Amin 1982). In other words, it could be argued that Sadat substituted the factory with the mosque in the struggle over the making of public spaces, a move that Sadat would be the first to pay the price for. Moreover, the Muslim Brothers (Ikhwan) played a significant role in Islamising Egyptian public spaces beyond universities.²⁰⁶ Islamic practices became visible and dominated Egyptian streets for the first time. In December 1976, the Muslim Brothers, joined with other Islamists as well, publicly prayed the Eid (feast prayer) outside the mosque, in Egyptian streets. In Cairo, the prayer took place in Abdeen Square, in front of Sadat's presidential palace, and was attended by around 50,000. In Alexandria, the prayer was performed in the Stadium of Alexandria and was attended by around 40,000 (Aboul Fotouh 2012: 50).²⁰⁷ Through Islamising Egyptian public spaces, Sadat sought to challenge the spatial repertoires developed under the Nasser regime and which legitimised his political discourse. Unlike Nasser, who turned Egyptian streets, squares, universities and factories into public spaces of authority that supported the ruling regime, Sadat sought to de-politicise Egyptian public spaces, substituting political performances that were conducted during the Nasser regime with religious performances.

²⁰⁴ Private mosques (*ahli* mosques) are not under the direct supervision of the state, represented in its Ministry of Religious Endowment. These mosques are 'self-constituted organisations, financed through private donations and staffed by imams selected by members of the local community' (Wickham 2002: 98). They are contrasted with government mosques (*hukumi* mosques), which are directly administered by the state.

²⁰⁵ With the strength of Islamist groups and their noticeable presence at universities, Sadat's discourse was becoming more Islamist. He named himself 'the believing president' *al-ra'is al-mu'min*, and said that his aim was to turn Egypt into a country of 'science and faith' *al-'ilm wa-l-iman* (Beattie 2000: 102).

²⁰⁶ Sadat released the leaders of the Muslim Brothers from prison in 1971, and allowed them to publish *al-Da'wa* (the Call) magazine, which distributed 85,000 copies a month (Aboul Fotouh 2012: 100-103).

²⁰⁷ See Figures 6 and 7.



Figure (6): Eid prayers in the Streets of Cairo 1976, attended by approx. 50,000 (Source: Aboul Fotouh 2012: 50).

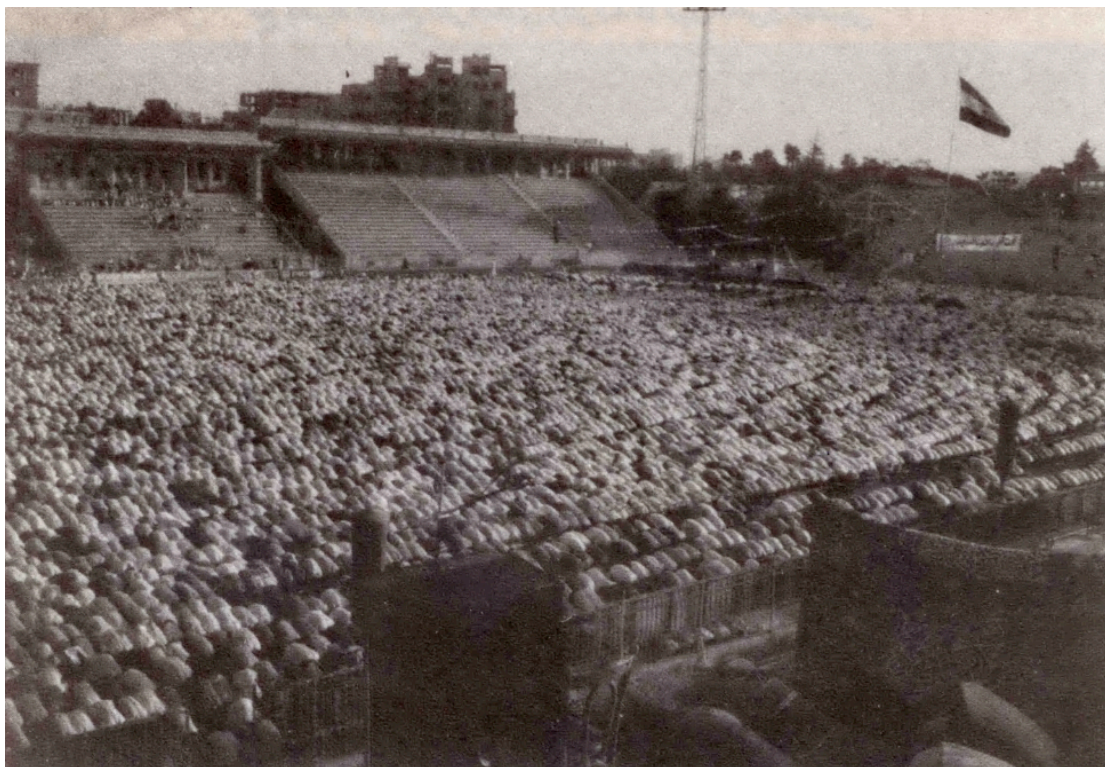


Figure (7): Eid prayers in Alexandria Stadium in 1976, attended by approx. 40,000 (Source: Aboul Fotouh 2012: 50).

Besides the Islamisation of Egyptian public spaces, Sadat's discourse of *Infitah* and the marketisation pattern that developed accordingly contributed to the transformation of Egyptian public spaces. Another process of commercialising and consumerising Egyptian public spaces was taking place at the same time as the Islamisation process. Rodenbeck (1998) captures the changes in the Egyptian city. He describes the rise of luxurious buildings that only the Arab rich and foreigners could afford. Also, the names of the shops had changed. During Nasser's era, with his emphasis on Arab nationalism, most shops retained Arabic names. With Sadat's discourse of *Infitah* and its 'openness' to the West, small shops with names like Hip Hop and Paradise were on the rise. Public housing, which was central to Nasser's making of Egyptian public spaces and opening of the city to the poor, had declined from constituting 5.7% during the mid-sixties, to 2.7% during the mid-seventies (Saad Eddin Ibrahim, quoted in Amin 1982: 10). Nezar AlSayyad (2011) describes Sadat's spatial exclusionary policies towards the poor as compared to Nasser in Cairo as follows:

While Nasser's approach was to make Cairo available to all, including the poor, Sadat's strategy had the effect of driving the poor out of areas marked for development. Sadat's reforms were centred in the same impetus to modernize Cairo as Nasser's earlier restructuring of urban space. However, for Sadat's administration, efforts to 'upgrade' housing conditions and 'rehabilitate' the city centre are perhaps better characterized as clean-up operations that aspired to put a prosperous Cairo on the global map, as had been the case during Ismail's time. Under Sadat the city was made more presentable and accessible to tourists, and more attractive to foreign capital. But the process of globalizing Cairo was also a project of exclusion, as many working-class families residing in areas like Bulaq were relocated to low-income public housing projects at the northern periphery of the city (p.262).

Galal Amin (1982) also makes an analogy between Sadat's Open Door policies and the 'open door' regulations that were imposed on Mohamed Ali's Egypt in the 19th century by European imperialists. While showing how the Egyptian society suffered from 'open door' imperialist policies during the 19th century, that had turned the Egyptian economy into a dependent economy and had opened Egypt to Western imperialist influences, Amin argued that Sadat's 'open door' policies of the seventies may well have led to the same implications. (p. 9-14). Amin also refers to an Egyptian architect, Hassan Fathy, who illustrates the difficulties he faced in restoring Egyptian architecture while constructing a new Egyptian village in Upper Egypt. He refers to

how Egyptian architecture was despised, while the spread of Western architecture was encouraged (p.38).

In the following section, I will discuss the resistance that developed within the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces and which was manifested in the food riots of 1977. The food riots erupted against the marketisation of Egyptian public spaces, which led to the de-Nasserisation, Islamisation and commercialisation of Egyptian public spaces. In the following section, I will show how protestors challenged the spatial routines that developed as a result of marketising Egyptian public spaces and which de-politicised public spaces. I will also show that although the protestors resisted the marketisation pattern and its manifestations, they reproduced its features and mechanisms.

Resistance within the Marketisation Pattern: The 1977 Food Riots

I belong to nobody sir

I am free to speak my conscience

And if you rule inside your own kingdom

The wide street is opening its arms to me

From the 'Street is Ours' song in Youssef Chahine's film 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' in 1976.

The contentions of January 1977 were triggered by a government decision to remove subsidies on essential goods, including bread, cooking oil and sugar.²⁰⁸ Once the news was published in newspapers and radio on the morning of 18 January 1977, Egyptians filled the streets of Egypt, from Alexandria to Aswan, chanting against the Sadat's *Infatih* policies. The angry protesters criticised Sadat, his wife and his corrupt businessmen, who were getting richer while Egyptians were getting poorer. Unlike the contentions of 1968, the food riots of 1977 were nationwide and more violent. Egyptians were violently transforming Egyptian public spaces, from being

²⁰⁸ The decision was declared in the evening of 17 Jan. 1977, when deputy Prime Minister, Qaissy, discussed the economic situation in parliament.

commercialised and de-politicised that produced consumerist subjects who complied with the Sadat regime, into public spaces of resistance that reflected their anger and rejection of Sadat's policies. Sadat was unable to control the riots, and for the first time since 1952, the military was asked to interfere to restore order. Although the protests were against the marketisation of Egyptian public spaces, they reproduced its basic principles, most notably the 'survival of the fittest'. The protestors' use of violence to re-define Egyptian public spaces was an expression of their power and ability to compete with other forces to constitute public spaces of resistance.

Moreover, the food riots of 1977 showed the distinction, yet the dynamism, between the public sphere and the public space. Seif al-Dawla (1980) and Abdel-Razeq (1979), who provide a detailed analysis and description of the food riots in 1977, emphasise the distinction between the Sadat regime's discourse propagated in newspapers, radio and television, or the media of the public sphere according to Habermas, and people's everyday encounter with public spaces, or what Lefebvre would call representational or lived space. Seif al-Dawla (1980) shows the headlines of Egyptian newspapers two years before the food riots, which emphasised that 'the prices of essential goods will not be touched' and that Sadat 'gives priority to the poor people'.²⁰⁹ Abdel-Raziq (1979) agrees with Seif al-Dawla, and emphasises the role played by newspapers and television in raising the expectations of Egypt's poor that their economic difficulties would be sorted out soon, a discourse that had been prominent in the Egyptian newspapers since the 1973 War, which made the decision to cut subsidies on essential commodities intolerable (p.72).

During the Sadat years, and particularly since the declaration of the 'open door' policies, *Infîtah*, the Egyptian public sphere was saturated with discussions on the prosperity that *Infîtah* would bring to all Egyptians. Newspapers, radio and television started advertising luxurious products imported from abroad which Egyptians had never seen before. At the same time, Sadat was emphasising that Egyptians would reap the fruits of their labour after the victory in the 1973 War against Israel (Sadat 1972). Sadat promised that every Egyptian would be able to buy all the luxurious commodities. Such advertisements were not the only thing that saturated the Egyptian

²⁰⁹ See Al-Ahram, 7 Feb. 1976, Al-Akhbar, 14 March 1976, and Al-Gumhuriyyah, 7 May 1976, documented in al-Dawla (1980), p.p. 31, 35-6.

public sphere. As discussed earlier, there was also another process of Islamising the Egyptian public sphere, which was not detached from the de-Nasserisation and commercialisation of the Egyptian public sphere. In newspapers and on television, Islamist preachers were advising the poor not to envy the rich for their money and their ability to buy luxurious commodities because it is a sin and against Islam.²¹⁰ Sheikh Sha'rawi, who was a popular Islamist preacher that was close to Sadat, stated:

If you see a building, for example, which earns its owner a lot of money, you should not envy the man. Rather you should pray for him because he has earned his money honestly. He has not exploited anyone because he has put food in the bellies and clothes on the backs of the poorest workers (Sha'rawi, quoted in Abaza 2006b: 59).

Sha'rawi's words were not out of context. The disparities between the rich and the poor that were widening in Egypt as a result of Infitah and which were spatially manifested were hard to ignore. Ahmed Bahaa Shabaan described to me the atmosphere of the 1970s before the food riots by saying that 'the majority of people were suffering, you can see that in the long queues in front of shops that sell subsidised goods. One may stay in a queue for hours without being able to buy one chicken or even nothing at all. Regardless of the rising number of private cars, transportation was a nightmare for the majority of Egyptians' (A. Shabaan 2012, Pers. Comm. April). Shabaan's analysis illustrates people's encounters with Egyptian public spaces under the Sadat regime, which was significantly different from what was being propagated in the Egyptian public sphere. In the previous section, I have shown how the process of Islamising and commercialising the Egyptian public sphere had its manifestation on the making of Egyptian public spaces. I have also shown the Sadat regime sought to undermine the Nasserisation of Egyptian public spaces and the political spatial repertoire that they had gained under the Nasser regime, through encouraging apolitical religious and consumerist practices in spaces like the university and the street. In this section, I will show that in spite of Sadat's success in altering the spatial routines of Egyptian public spaces in the short term, it failed to prevent the transformation of these spaces into public spaces of resistance against the Sadat regime, which was evident during the food riots of 1977. In other words, although the process of Islamising and commercialising the Egyptian public sphere

²¹⁰ Islamist preachers were also making a comparison between Nasser's confiscation of private property, which was against Islam, and Sadat's encouragement for investment.

was manifested spatially, as discussed earlier, the contradictions and disparities within the discourse of the Sadat regime became also manifested spatially. The marketisation of the process of constituting public spaces, which led to the commercialisation and Islamisation of Egyptian public spaces, produced consumerist subjects that were unable to buy the products that they encountered every day, and Islamist subjects who were unable to expand their cultural and political influence beyond specific spaces defined by the regime. Against these contradictions between the political discourses of the public sphere and the making of Egyptian public spaces, the food riots of 1977 erupted.

***Helwan* Factories: Again and Always**

On 18 January 1977, workers from *Helwan* industrial area were gathering in their factories discussing the appropriate actions to take in response to the government decision to cut subsidies on essential goods. It did not take long before the workers decided to take to the streets, chanting against Sadat and his 'open-door' policies of *Infitah*.²¹¹ According to Abdel-Raziq (1979)²¹², the workers of *Helwan* were the first to go on demonstrations against the government decisions (p.80). Abdel-Raziq was correctly referring to the spatial repertoire the city of *Helwan* had gained under the Nasser regime. As discussed in chapter three, Nasser transformed the city of *Helwan* into an industrial city that reflected his developmental discourse with socialism at its centre. The Nasserisation of *Helwan* factories continued after Nasser's death. When Sadat was giving his first speech to the workers in *Helwan*, the workers raised Nasser's portrait, confirming the Nasserisation repertoire that *Helwan* factories retained. During the food riots of 1977, *Helwan* workers were resisting the de-Nasserisation of Egyptian public spaces that was achieved through the marketisation pattern. The workers' slogans were '*Abdel Nasser yama 'aal khali balo min al-'omal*' (Nasser had always said take care of the workers' (Abdel-Raziq 1979: 82), which reflected their resistance of de-Nasserisation. The workers wanted to show the Sadat regime that they were against the *Infitah* policies and that they would no longer

²¹¹ This was not the first action taken by the workers against the Sadat regime. The confrontation between the workers and the Sadat regime started as early as 1971, only a couple of months after Sadat came to power. There were various strikes and protests against the regime, particularly in the years after the declaration of *Infitah*. The year of 1976 witnessed two major protests in Damietta and in a military factory, in which the workers threatened to 'blow up' the factory (see Shoukri 1987: 217).

²¹² Abdel-Raziq cites the police report that was sent to the General Prosecutor on 1 Feb. 1977.

remain silent. Accordingly, the workers headed to downtown Cairo, where the Egyptian parliament and Sadat's presidential palace were located. The ruling regime sought to prevent the expansion of public spaces of resistance emerging in *Helwan*. Regardless of the police attempts to isolate *Helwan* from other cities, workers managed to reach *Tahrir* Square (Cairo Security Chief's Report, 1 Feb. 1977)²¹³.

***Tahrir* Square: A Meeting Point for all Angry Protesters**

Once the students of Cairo University and Ain Shams University heard of the *Helwan* workers demonstrations, they rushed to *Tahrir* Square. As Ahmed Bahaa Shabaan tells me 'we (Cairo University students) rushed to *Tahrir* Square, which represented a meeting point between the students and workers. The train that comes from Helwan stops at *Bab el-Louq* in *Tahrir* Square... also it connected Egypt's various governorates; where all buses coming from outside Cairo had to stop in *Tahrir*' (A. Shabaan 2011, Pers. Comm. July). In other words, *Tahrir* Square, with its spatial settings, conferred agency to the protestors to join forces. When the workers started to arrive at *Tahrir* Square, the slogans turned to '*ehna al-sha'b ma'a al-'omal ded tahalof ra's al-mal* (we are the people with the workers against the capitalist coalition) (Abdel Raziq 1979: 82; Shabaan 2009: 41).

²¹³ The report is published in Abdel-Raziq (1979), p. 201- 203.



Figure (8): 'Sadat's Conspiracy will Fall'. One of the posters during the 1977 uprising (Source: Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists' Facebook Event Page²¹⁴)

The protests in *Tahrir* Square were an expression of Egyptians' refusal of Sadat's policies of *Infitah*. Nevertheless, they were also a cry against the marketisation of Egyptian public spaces, which led to the de-Nasserisation, Islamisation and commercialisation of Egyptian public spaces. The slogans of the protestors in *Tahrir* Square were meant to challenge the spatial routines that were being imposed on Egyptian public spaces as a result of the marketisation pattern. The slogans were supporting Nasser, to challenge the de-Nasserisation process²¹⁵. The protestors were singing and dancing within the square (Shabaan 2009: 43), which challenged the Islamisation of Egyptian public spaces, and finally, the protestors' slogans against *Infitah*, corruption and the consumerism were challenging the commercialisation of Egyptian public spaces (Seif al-Dawla 1980: 27). As the ruling regime felt threatened by these slogans, it replied through the use of violence against the protestors (Abdel-Raziq 1979: 81). The protestors responded to the police brutality violently.

²¹⁴ The poster was posted on the Revolutionary Socialists Facebook event page, as they organised a symposium to commemorate the 1977 food riots in January 2012, which was attended by a number of leftist political activists who participated in the uprising of 18 and 19 January 1977.: <http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=122718471132064&topic=17> (Last Accessed: 23/1/2012).

²¹⁵ Like the slogan 'Nasser has always said take care of the workers', or 'Nasser has always said there is no freedom with exploitation'. For all slogans raised during the food riots see Seif al-Dawla (1980): 27.

Nevertheless, the protestors' violence was not only directed at the police, it was also directed at public spaces.

The Street: Violence against the Marketisation of Egyptian Public Spaces

According to Abdel-Raziq (1979), the protests were peaceful until the evening of 18 January 1977, after which they turned violent (p.82). The protestors' violence, however, was spatial, which reflects the political significance of the process of constituting public spaces. The protestors smashed and burnt the headquarters of Sadat's political party (*hizb Misr*) and police stations (Al-Ahram, 20 January 1977: 3). Most of the smashing and burning, however, was directed towards the manifestations of Sadat's *Infitah* and the commercialisation of Egyptian public spaces. The protestors smashed shops, hotels, banks, cafes and restaurants, not only in Cairo, but also all over Egypt (Al-Ahram, 20 January 1977:3). As Al-Khouly (1977) rightly notes, the protestors targeted 'the glass announcements on streetlight poles that advertised imported luxury products and the windows of the shops that sold them at extravagant prices' (al-Khouly, quoted in Baker 1990: 125). Even Islamists, who represented an important ingredient of Sadat's marketisation pattern, realised the disparities and contradictions of the discourse of authority and public spaces. Radical Islamists violently smashed all nightclubs in Pyramids Road (*Sharei' al-Haram*) that became a landmark of Sadat's discourse. As Ayubi (1991a) notes:

'the notorious Pyramids Road came to symbolise, morally and socially, all the obscenities of *Infitah*, as the 'oil sheikhs' and the "nouveaux riches" scattered their money endlessly around the depraved fleshpots of this infamous highway on alcohol and immorality! In the food riots of January 1977, bearded youth (i.e. members of the militant Islamic groups) were seen setting fire to the nightclubs and cabarets and smashing the wicked whiskey bottles' (p.75).



Figure (9): One of Egypt's leading hotels burnt during the food riots (Source: Hossam el-Hamalawy on flicker)²¹⁶

The protests lasted for two days and only ended after the intervention of the Egyptian army and its deployment in the streets to restore order, a move that was only taken after Sadat pulled back all government decisions that triggered the uprising. After the uprising, Sadat sought to undermine the rising discourse of resistance against him, and hence accused leftists of organising the uprising to undermine his rule (Abdel-Raziq 1979). Sadat called the food riots of 1977, the 'thieves uprising', to undermine the political significance of the protests. Al-Ahram declared the arrest of 'communist agents' who were behind the uprising (Al-Ahram, 21 January 1977). In the following days, all Egyptian newspapers, with the exception of leftist ones, reiterated Sadat's accusations against leftists and Nasserists. Regardless of the arrest of hundreds of leftists and Islamists, who were tried for their role in the uprising, all defendants were acquitted (Seif al-Dalwa 1980). Like the burning of Cairo in January 1952, the food riots were marking the end of public spaces of authority that reflected Sadat's discourse. The years following the 1977 food riots witnessed Sadat's retreat from the process of marketising Egyptian public spaces, and saw the seeds of the securitisation pattern of constituting public spaces, which Sadat's successor, Mubarak, would endorse for thirty years. Sadat jailed both leftists and Islamists, and restricted all their

²¹⁶ Hossam El-Hamalawy Flickr page: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/elhamalawy/sets/72157603231943668/show/> (Last Accessed 4/4/2012).

activities (Baker 1990: 122). Aboul Fotouh (2012) illustrates that following the food riots Islamists' activities were restricted within the university and outside it (p.111). Sadat's repressive mechanisms were harsher on Islamists, who started to compete with Sadat over the public use of violence. Sadat turned harsher on Islamists, which even led to the radicalisation of more Islamists. Sadat's visit to Israel in November 1977, and the signature of the peace treaty with Israel, put him in direct confrontation with all Islamist groups, which he helped nurture. The confrontation ended with Sadat's assassination on 6 October 1981, during a public military parade commemorating the 1973 War. The confrontation between the ruling regime and Islamists continued during the Mubarak regime and had significant implications on the making of Egyptian public spaces, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5:

The Securitisation Pattern and the Making of Egyptian Public Spaces under the Mubarak Regime

Tahrir Is the Safest Place

'I want everyone to join us (in Tahrir Square), it is very safe here, actually it is the safest place... don't be afraid'.

An Egyptian Protestor in Tahrir Square 28/01/2011²¹⁷

On 25 January 2011, Egyptians took to the streets of Cairo and other major cities, demanding the resignation of the Minister of Interior. The demand was accelerated with the rising number of Egyptians taking to the streets and turned into a call for the resignation of Mubarak and the fall of his regime. This was manifested in the people's expressive slogan '*al-sha'b yurid Isqat al-Nizam*' (the people want the fall of the regime'). After 18 days of persistent protests, accompanied by an occupation of *Tahrir* Square in downtown Cairo, President Mubarak stepped down after spending 30 years in power. It was not a matter of coincidence that the protests erupted on the Egyptian national police day. The protestors sought to challenge the brutal practices of the police that were conducted in public spaces, and which created a repertoire of public spaces as being dangerous spaces where people struggled to survive. In other words, Egyptian public spaces were designated in security language, a process that started during the last years of Sadat's reign following the 1977 food riots and which continued until his assassination. Sadat's assassination, which was performed publicly and was meant to capture the largest number of audiences, and the subsequent confrontation with militant Islamists that was also manifested spatially, reinforced the securitisation of Egyptian public spaces. Regardless of the decline of militant

²¹⁷ From Aljazeera Arabic Live Coverage of the Egyptian Revolution, *Misr tatahadath 'an nafsaha* (Egypt speaks for itself), 28/01/2011.

Islamism at the end of the 1990s, the Mubarak regime maintained the securitisation²¹⁸ pattern, prohibiting all political activities in Egyptian public spaces. The police tried to maintain the repertoire of Egyptian public spaces as being dangerous spaces. Incidents in which the police beat and tortured political activists publicly were repeated. The incident of Khalid Said, a young Alexandrian who was tortured to death in front of his house, became an icon of police brutality conducted in public spaces. The police turned a blind eye to the rising sexual harassment against women in the streets of Egypt, which turned into a phenomenon.²¹⁹ During the 18 days of occupying *Tahrir* Square, Egyptians turned the Square into a 'safe space'.²²⁰ As one protestor, who is quoted above, confirms 'Tahrir is the safest place'. In order to ensure the safety of *Tahrir* Square, the protestors securitised the space of the square, through placing security checkpoints around the square to inspect those entering it. In other words, the protestors, though challenging the ruling regime's securitisation of Egyptian public space, they also reproduced the securitisation pattern, yet to constitute public spaces of resistance.

In this chapter, I will discuss a third pattern of constituting public spaces, which I refer to as the securitisation pattern that developed under the Mubarak regime. Like the previous empirical chapters, I will first discuss the political contentions that were taking place under the Mubarak regime and which contributed to the rise of the securitisation pattern. I will do so through focusing on the incident of *Imbaba* and the confrontation with militant Islamists. I will then discuss the effects and manifestations of the securitisation pattern. Finally, I will discuss the resistance that developed from within the pattern and in reaction to it and which was manifested in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 and the struggle over *Tahrir* Square.

²¹⁸ The work of Buzan, Waever and De Wilde (1998) on the securitisation theory in international relations and their emphasis on the constructivism of security threats helped me immensely in developing my insights on the securitisation of Egyptian public spaces.

²¹⁹ In 2005, when Egyptians were celebrating during Eid al-fitr (Islamic feasts after Ramadan) by going to public parks, mass harassment took place, in which 150 men or more were publicly harassing women in the streets without intervention from the police. The incident was repeated in the following *Eid* (feast) again without police intervention, turning sexual harassment into a dominant practice in Egyptian public spaces, reinforcing their identification as dangerous spaces.

²²⁰ As discussed in chapter 2, Tilly (2000) coined the concept of 'safe spaces'.

Political Contentions and the Rise of the Securitisation Pattern

Following the assassination of Sadat at the hands of militant Islamists in 1981²²¹, Hosni Mubarak, Sadat's vice-president, was sworn in as president. Mubarak's rise to power came at a critical moment, where the Egyptian state was facing a prominent threat from radically violent groups who managed to assassinate the head of the state and were preparing to confiscate the state itself. Sadat's assassination by militant Islamists, who flourished under his rule and were granted full power to constitute public spaces that countered the power of pro-Nasser public spaces, had a significant impact on Mubarak's attitude towards public spaces. Mubarak, who lacked political experience, saw the fate of his predecessor in front of his own eyes and decided to avoid any engagement with public spaces. He experienced the implications of the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces which led to the empowerment of radical Islamists and hence decided to abandon the pattern altogether. Abandoning the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces started in the final years of Sadat's rule, particularly after the food riots of 1977, as discussed earlier. The assassination of Sadat and the subsequent confrontation with militant Islamists re-enforced the identification of Egyptian public spaces as being dangerous and threatening, and hence they were treated as a security concern. The process of securitising Egyptian public spaces was accelerated after the assassination of Sadat. The violent struggle between the ruling regime and militant Islamists was manifested spatially, adding more restrictions on the making of Egyptian public spaces. These restrictions were legally fortified through the reinforcement of Egypt's long lasting emergency law (Seif El-Islam 2002: 364),²²² which restricted public gatherings and political activities in public spaces. The presence of police vehicles in front of Cairo University, Ain Shams University, *Helwan* and *al-Mahalla al-Kubra* factories are all manifestations of the Mubarak regime's attitude towards public spaces. In other words, although militant Islamists posed a significant threat to the Egyptian state, they legitimised

²²¹ Sadat's assassination came after the collaboration between two radical Islamist groups: the Islamic *Jihad* and *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyyah*. For further information on the radical Islamic groups that assassinated Sadat and their incentives see Sayyid Ahmed (1988). For a comprehensive overview of radical Islamist groups in Egypt see Sayyid Ahmed (1991).

²²² Egypt's state of emergency was declared in the aftermath of the 1967 war according to Law No. 162 of 1958. The use of the emergency law under Nasser and Sadat was mainly directed towards secret political activities against the ruling regime. In Mubarak's Egypt, the emergency law was primarily used to curb political activities in Egyptian public spaces.

Mubarak's claim to power, strengthened his discourse of stability and justified his disengagement with public spaces.

If Nasser's discourse was a mixture of nationalism, modernisation and social equality, and if Sadat's discourse was one of marketisation and economic freedom, Mubarak's discourse was one of stability. Mubarak's discourse of stability was strengthened by the security threats facing the Egyptian state at the time.²²³ In order to gain support for his stability discourse, Mubarak started reconciliation with almost all political forces that had been marginalised and imprisoned by Sadat, including the Muslim Brothers²²⁴. Nevertheless, although Mubarak started his reign with some decorative political reforms that were primarily directed towards party politics (Kassem 2004: 54-5), he systematically restricted political activities in Egypt's contentious spaces, most notably universities, factories and the street²²⁵, under the pretext that they might be misused by militant Islamists to spread their radical violent ideology. The contentions between Islamists and the Mubarak regime, which led to the development of the securitisation pattern of constituting Egyptian public spaces, became manifested in what was known in the media as the 'Siege of *Imbaba*'. In the following section, I will discuss the police siege of the district of Imbaba in December 1993, which illustrates the political contentions that were taking place under the Mubarak regime and which led to the acceleration of the securitisation pattern of constituting Egyptian public spaces.

The Islamic Republic of *Imbaba*

In December 1992, the district of *Imbaba*, located on the western side of the Nile, became the centre of international attention when '12,000 Egyptian soldiers led by

²²³ Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, a prominent Egyptian journalist who was also the minister of information during Nasser's reign, argued that Mubarak's legitimacy was to achieve stability after the assassination of Sadat. In an interview with Al-Jazeera Arabic on 16/12/2007, Heikal (2007) criticised Mubarak's stability discourse for its lack of political vision. Heikal said 'oh stability, how many crimes are being committed in your name' referring to Mubarak's use of stability as a justification to curb political opposition and block political spaces.

²²⁴ The first decision of Mubarak was to release political activists of all political orientations (leftists, Nasserists, Islamists) who were imprisoned by Sadat in 1981 two months before his assassination in a massive wave of political persecution.

²²⁵ Since the seventies, the mosque has also been constituted as a public space as a result of Sadat's religious discourse. Although it was constituted as public space of authority, resistance discourses were born at the same time and it was also constituted as public space of resistance. The contentious nature of the mosque that accelerated during Sadat, pushed his successor to consider them, like other contentious spaces, as dangerous spaces that needed to be restricted.

2,000 police officers and supported by 100 armoured vehicles' besieged *Imbaba* in a crackdown campaign against militant Islamists who were controlling the area (Al-Ahram, 9 Dec. 1992: 1). The 'Siege of *Imbaba*', which took several weeks, was initiated when militant Islamists, who were particularly affiliated to *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyyah*, called for a number of international press conferences in November 1992, in which they declared the establishment of the 'Islamic Republic of *Imbaba*' which was 'a state within a state' (Abdalla 1993: 29; Singerman 2011:113-4).²²⁶ The ruling regime's use of a large police force to besiege *Imbaba* was meant to reflect the power of the Egyptian security apparatus and its readiness to crush resistance through fierce security measures. As Hafez (1992) confirms, the massive police crackdown on *Imbaba* would give the impression that the police were fighting an army of Islamists which was not the case, yet the ruling regime sought to send a message to everyone that 'the autonomous republic of *Imbaba* is controlled by the legitimate state' (p.9). In other words, the Mubarak regime was confirming its control over Egyptian public spaces through a public display of the ruling regime's police forces and arsenal of weapons.

The district of *Imbaba* is considered one of the most densely populated quarters of Cairo with more than one million inhabitants at the beginning of the 1990s. *Imbaba* was one of many 'informal communities' or slums known in Egypt as '*ashwa'iyyat*' that were growing at a very high rate since the 1970s as a result of the government's cuts on public housing projects offered to low-income people and the following *Infitah* policies, which resulted in a boom in residential prices (Al-Sayyad 2011: 260). '*Ashwa'iyyat*' literally means 'half-hazard' or 'haphazard', which reflect the lack of planning, services and to some extent the illegality of such communities (Bayat and Denis 2000: 185). As discussed in the previous chapter, the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces led to the Islamisation of Egyptian public spaces. Nevertheless, when Islamist groups of different shades managed to mobilise a large sector of the Egyptian youth (Wickham 2002; Ismail 2006a),²²⁷ they sought to

²²⁶ As Singerman 2011 illustrates, there were various reasons behind the regime's crackdown on Islamists in *Imbaba*, including the Islamists' press conferences which embarrassed the Mubarak regime and also the Islamists' efficient response to the earthquake crisis that hit Egypt in 1992, which increased the legitimacy of Islamists at the expense of the Mubarak regime.

²²⁷ While Ismail (2006a) focuses on the mobilisation of militant Islamists, particularly *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyyah* and *al-Jihad* in poor quarters and informal communities, Wickham (2002) details the

monopolise Egyptian public spaces, which put them in direct confrontation with the ruling regime. The Islamists' mobilisation efforts were particularly successful in poor areas and '*ashwa'iyyat*' for a variety of reasons (Ismail 2006a: 94; Bayat 2007a, 2007b). As Ismail (2006a) explains, the expansion of Islamist activism in '*ashwa'iyyat*' was facilitated by the physical features of these informal communities. The lack of paved roads and the 'rocky landscape' of these informal communities made them less accessible to outsiders, especially the police, and reinforced their domination over these spaces (Ismail 2006a: 94).

Imbaba represented a safe haven for Islamists because of its physical and social settings. As Nabil Omar (1992) illustrates in *Al-Ahram*, *Imbaba* represented a fertile space for Islamists for three reasons: 1) the over-crowdedness of *Imbaba*, which made it easy to fuse with its heterogeneous inhabitants without being recognised, 2) it was far from the grip of the police,²²⁸ 3) *Imbaba* was surrounded by open agricultural land, which would facilitate the Islamists' escape (Al-Ahram, 8 Dec. 1992: 3). Nevertheless, Nabil Omar did not mention one of the most important reasons for the success of militant Islamists in expanding their power in *Imbaba*, which was the ruling regime's failure to provide the inhabitants of Western *Mounira* (*Imbaba's* most populated and poorest neighbourhoods) with basic needs including food, drinkable water, sewage system, healthcare and schooling. Islamists provided the inhabitants of these informal communities with food, schools, security and health care, which the ruling regime failed to provide (Ismail 2006a; Malthaner 2011: 128). The regime's inability to provide basic needs for the residents of *Imbaba* and other '*ashwa'iyyat*' was not for the lack of funds or the weakness of the regime's enforcement measures (Dorman 2007), it was rather one of the ruling regime's strategies to control Egyptian public spaces. The informal communities, '*ashwa'iyyat*', reflected the securitisation pattern of constituting Egyptian public spaces. The lack of basic needs in these communities transformed them into public spaces for survival.²²⁹ It could be argued that when militant Islamists, regardless of the imminent threat they posed to the ruling

mobilisation of moderate Islamists, most notably the Muslim Brothers in poor areas, but also at universities, professional syndicates and trade unions.

²²⁸ According to Nabil Omar (1992), the closest police station to Western *Mounira* (*Imbaba's* poorest and most populated neighborhood) is 1 kilometre away. Even this police station is 'decorative' without enough weapons or forces (p.3).

²²⁹ See Ismail (2006b) on survival strategies for the inhabitants of the Cairo quarters of *Bulaq al-Dakrur*. Also see Bayat (1997) on Cairo's poor survival and solidarity strategies.

regime, were effectively de-securitising the space of *Imbaba* through providing people with basic needs and hence allowing the space of *Imbaba* to be transformed into a public space of resistance against the ruling regime, and not a space for mere survival, the ruling regime stepped in to restore the securitisation of the space of *Imbaba* and the spatial repertoire that was attached to it as being spaces for survival.

The Egyptian public sphere significantly contributed to the securitisation of *Imbaba* and of ‘*ashwa’iyyat* altogether. The Egyptian media were saturated with discussion, studies, articles and TV programmes on the threat of ‘*ashwa’iyyat* and the Mubarak regime’s efforts to protect these informal communities from the threat of terrorism.²³⁰ As Singerman (2011) rightly highlights, ‘in the five years preceding the siege of *Imbaba*, the bureaucracy, the state, and the media had finally “discovered” the phenomenon of informal housing areas, despite the fact that millions of lower-class and middle-class people lived in these areas’ (p.115). In other words, *Imbaba* and informal housing areas were being securitised and considered a threat to the Egyptian national security, when Islamists managed to mobilise the inhabitants of these areas. When the confrontation between Islamists and the Mubarak regime expanded beyond the informal housing, the ruling regime securitised Egyptian public spaces, portraying them as threat to national security. The contestation between militant Islamists and the ruling regime consumed Egyptian public spaces, which negatively affected political activities in Egyptian public spaces. As Ahmed Bahaa Shabaan told me ‘the struggle over Egyptian public spaces was a zero-sum game for all political forces; it was either to join the ruling regime camp against terrorism, or to join terrorism against the ruling regime; a tough choice that confused everyone and led to a decline in street activities’ (Shabaan 2012, Pers. Comm. April).

Effects and Manifestations of the Securitisation Pattern

‘The (Mubarak) regime deals with political, economic and social problems as security problems, which will create a lot of problems’

²³⁰ See for instance Al-Ahram coverage of the Imbaba incident from 8 Dec. 1992 until the beginning of Jan. 1993, with various articles on the ‘ashwa’iyyat threat to Egyptian national security and social cohesion.

This is Chaos?

In his last film, 'This is Chaos' released in 2007, Chahine depicted the corruption of the Egyptian security apparatus and its interference in the lives of Egyptians. Chahine tells the story of Shubra, one of Egypt's popular (*Sha 'by*) quarters, in which Hatem, a corrupted police officer, enjoys extensive powers. Regardless of the police presence in the area and of Hatem's interference in the inhabitants' daily activities, life in Shubra is chaotic and far from safe. Crimes are taking place every day and Hatem himself, the police officer, is involved in fuelling many of them. The police only interfere effectively when political activities are taking place in public spaces, where it deploys numerous troops against peaceful protestors. The people of Shubra hate Hatem but never dare to stand against him. They are struggling to survive under very tough economic conditions, something that Hatem exploits to sustain his grip over them. When people realise that their own survival is jeopardised by Hatem and the brutality of the police, they revolt against him and besiege the police station until Hatem commits suicide.

When Mubarak came to power in the aftermath of Sadat's assassination, the securitisation of Egyptian public spaces was justified by the confrontation between the ruling regime and militant Islamists who posed a threat to the Egyptian national security, which was manifested in the case of *Imbaba*. As discussed earlier, Mubarak maintained a discourse of stability that allowed him to prevent the rise of public spaces of resistance as a result of the confrontation between the ruling regime and militant Islamists, which lasted until the 1997 terrorist attacks in Luxor.²³² On 17 November 1997, members of the militant Islamist group *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyyah* stormed the Hatshepsut temple in Luxor, killing sixty-eight tourists and Egyptians. Although the massacre was meant to undermine the power of the ruling regime, it led to internal divisions within Islamist groups and unified Egyptians against militant

²³¹ (F. Allam 2010, Pers. Comm. December)

²³² Militant Islamists argue that the ruling regime was fueling the confrontation. The regime's fierce repression against militant Islamists was driving them into a circle of revenge that was meant to keep the confrontation prolonged and intensified (Gerges 2005: 152-3).

Islamists (Gerges 2005: 153). The 1997 terrorist attacks in Luxor marked the decline of the threat of militant Islamism after a period of confrontation with the ruling regime that was manifested spatially and had prevented all forms of political activities in Egyptian public spaces, transforming them into spaces for mere survival. With the decline of militant Islamism threat, Mubarak's stability discourse was no longer sufficient to justify the restrictions imposed on the public space and maintain the securitisation pattern of constituting Egyptian public spaces.

Unlike Nasser and Sadat, Mubarak had no national project (A. el-Shobaky 2010, Pers. Comm., 24 June) that could maintain the regime's power over public spaces. The beneficiaries of Mubarak's regime, the *nouveau riche* of Sadat's era who turned into 'fat cats' during Mubarak, were alerted to this fact and started thinking of Gamal Mubarak as someone who would be able to protect the regime. According to Hassan Nafaa²³³, the project for presidential succession started in 1998, through the American- Egyptian council headed by Ibrahim Kamel, a controversial business tycoon whose wealth was questioned. Nafaa argues that since that date, Gamal Mubarak was preparing himself for a public role: 'Mofeed Shehab²³⁴ asked me to recommend some university professors to meet with Gamal Mubarak because he was interested in public affairs... it was apparent that Gamal Mubarak was trying to have access to universities, trade unions, and intellectual circles... the presidential succession project had been in the making since the end of the 1990s' (H. Nafaa 2011, Pers. Comm., 23 March). Indeed, Gamal Mubarak was exploiting his privileged position as the president's son to re-define Egyptian public spaces. And to institutionalise his attempts, he created '*gam3eyet geel el-mostaqbal*' (Future Generation), an NGO that provided Egyptian youth with employment skills, and was located inside Cairo University²³⁵. In 2000, Gamal Mubarak joined the NDP, which gave him an institutional and formal status. The NDP underwent a restructuring process in 2002 following its poor performance in the 2000 parliamentary

²³³ Hassan Nafaa was the coordinator and co-founder of the Egyptian campaign against presidential succession. He was also a former head of the political science department at Cairo University.

²³⁴ Mofeed Shehab is a law professor at Cairo University and was close to the presidential circles. He later became the minister for higher education and then state's minister for parliamentary affairs.

²³⁵ Gamal Mubarak's Future Generation NGO has a huge building at Cairo University, something that other NGOs cannot access.

elections²³⁶. The National Democratic Party (NDP) with Mubarak Junior as its energising power, declared the ‘New Thinking Initiative of the National Democratic Party’ or ‘*mobadret al-fikr al-gedid lel hizb alwatani al-dimokrati*’. According to the new initiative, the party would start a massive process of restructuring and institutionalisation and the ruling party would adopt democratic measures that would allow the party to have greater role in Egyptian politics²³⁷. In 2007, it publicised its “comprehensive strategic vision” of a state that would be politically civil, economically liberal, and socially driven, and which would shape the national security strategy to serve the interests of the Egyptian state. The reasons behind the NDP initiatives for reform are vague. According to Dr. Mohamed Kamal, the former head of the media committee of the NDP and a close aide to Gamal Mubarak, the process of reforming the NDP was in response to the poor performance of the party in the 2000 parliamentary elections, and not as some people suggest as a result of US pressure for democracy after 9/11 nor to polish Gamal Mubarak for presidency (M. Kamal 2010, Pers. Comm., 25 June). Nevertheless, the excessive visibility of Gamal Mubarak in public platforms had alerted political opposition. In fact, the new discourse of power initiated by the ruling party triggered and enabled resistance to this discourse. New political forces emerged to challenge Gamal Mubarak’s attempts to manipulate Egyptian public sphere to legitimate his rise to power. They were seeking to re-constitute public spaces that were consumed by the violent struggle between the state and militant Islamists. According to Hossam el-Hamalawy, the confrontation between the state and the militant Islamists had meant ‘the death of street action’ (El-Hamalawy 2011). Even after the decline of militant Islamist threats, Egyptian public spaces were not automatically transformed into public spaces of resistance. The manifestations of the securitisation pattern represented a challenge to forces of resistance, which created a repertoire of public spaces as being ones of authority rather than of resistance.

The continuous presence of central security forces (CSF), Egypt’s para-military riot control police, in the streets and in front of universities and factories reinforced the

²³⁶ The NDP had lost a majority in the parliament and had only maintained its majority by recruiting independent candidates who won the elections after resigning from the NDP.

²³⁷ NDP official documents on citizenship and political reform, September 2007, available online: www.ndp.org.eg (Last Accessed 12/12/2010). (The Website is no longer available, but I have a soft copy of the documents).

securitisation of Egyptian public spaces. In front of Cairo University and Ain Shams University, for instance, there were ten armoured vehicles that were permanently present regardless of whether there were protests against the ruling regime or not.²³⁸ The permanent presence of police created a repertoire of public spaces as being spaces for survival, which produced subjects that complied with the ruling regime's discourse of stability. As Heba Raouf, an Islamist political activist who teaches political science at Cairo University explains:

When we were protesting against the ruling regime in *Tahrir* Square in 2005 because of the regime's repression and corruption, people in public buses were cursing us because we were hindering the movement of cars in the square. Imagine, we were protesting against the ruling regime that turned the lives of those who were cursing us into a misery and yet they take the side of the regime against us, simply because they wanted to go to work and we were blocking the road (H. Raouf 2010, Pers. Comm., 20 May)

The behaviour of the bus passengers towards protesting political activists was not surprising. The bus passengers had internalised the repertoire of public spaces, which reinforces the understanding of public spaces as spaces for survival. Political protests were considered alien to public spaces and hence were rejected. During the confrontation between the ruling regime and militant Islamists, public spaces were redefined to allow particular activities and prohibit others. As political activities were prohibited as a result of the emergency law and the violent confrontation with Islamists, apolitical practices were welcomed in public spaces including moving from one place to another, shopping, fighting and sexually harassing women. In other words, the primary function of Egyptian public spaces was reduced to mere survival.

Regardless of the regime's attempts to block the formulation and spreading of public spaces of resistance, rising social movements struggled to redefine Egyptian public spaces, by calling for political protests in Egyptian streets, despite the regime's repression and the dominant pattern of constituting Egyptian public spaces which led to their securitisation. The opportunity to retrieve Egyptian street actions and to use

²³⁸ When I used to take the bus from Heliopolis to Cairo University, passing by Ain Shams University, between 2002 and 2006, I observed that the number of armoured vehicles increased when protests erupted. I recall one passenger in the bus saying 'you do not need to follow the news to know whether there are protests or not, just count the number of armoured cars'.

the street as a medium for political expression came with the second Palestinian intifada in 2000, with thousands of Egyptians taking to the streets of Cairo to protest against the Israeli attacks on civilian Palestinians (Schemm 2002). Protestors showed their anger over Egypt's good relations with Israel and the US, and the failure to take appropriate actions to stop the atrocities committed by Israel. Mubarak's regime had no choice but to tolerate these protests, at least the ones that were explicitly against Israel and the US. Mubarak agreed to loosen the regime's control over public spaces with regard to foreign issues, in order to absorb public dissent. Mubarak's decision to tolerate such streets actions was influenced by a number of factors. The first was related to the sensitivity of the Palestinian issues and its centrality to the Egyptian public and leadership. The support of the Palestinian cause had been one of the sources of the regime's legitimacy and hence blocking such demonstrations and public activities would give a message that Mubarak sided with the Israelis against the Palestinians and would increase criticisms against him. Secondly, it would be a great opportunity for Mubarak's rivals, particularly the Muslim Brothers who were actively engaged in all the activities that supported the Palestinian intifada, to mobilise against him. This came at a time when Mubarak's son, Gamal, was being polished, and speculations about the succession of power from Mubarak senior to Mubarak junior had started.

The Palestinian intifada had another impact on Egyptian activism. New networks that were politically active, and which were not ideologically driven, were on the rise (El-Amrani 2006). Egyptians, from different political trends, had joined forces to organise public conferences and aid convoys to support the Palestinian intifada, challenging the ruling regime's emergency law. The success of these groups to break the ideological barrier in support for a non-domestic issue had its impact on the evolution of the Egyptian oppositional elite that led to the rise of the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya), which paved the way for the re-making of the street into a public space of resistance and the opening up of new spaces for public protests, not only with regard to foreign issues but also domestic issues related to Mubarak and his regime. In 2003, only three years after the Palestinian intifada and the re-making of the street into a public space of resistance, thousands of protestors took to the streets of Egypt, chanting against the US-British invasion of Iraq. The protestors criticized the Egyptian regime for allowing American warships to cross the Suez Canal towards

Iraq. Violence against protestors had been reported and some activists had been detained (Guardian, 25 March 2003). In spite of the fact that the demonstrations were primarily against the US and western powers, and regardless of the participation of the ruling National Democratic party in the protests²³⁹, the scale and the strength of the protests and the challenge they posed to the security forces had inspired angry political activists, most notably the founders of the Egyptian Movement of Change (EMC), known as *Kefaya*, literally meaning ‘enough’.

Policing of the Public Space: Policing resistance, reinforcing securitisation

The Egyptian Movement for Change (*Kefaya*), started as a new cross- ideological protest movement, calling for an end to President Mubarak’s rule, which had resulted in deteriorated political, economic and social conditions of Egypt and a decline in Egypt’s regional power, leading to the invasion of Iraq and the deteriorated situation in the Palestinian occupied territories. The start of *Kefaya* movement dates back to October 2003, during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. According to George Ishaq²⁴⁰, a co-founder of the movement and a political activist, *Kefaya* movement started with a Ramadan *Iftar* (dinner) in the house of Abu el-Ela Maadi, a former Muslim Brothers’ member who split to form a moderate Islamist Party called al-Wassat²⁴¹. The ability of the founding members of the *Kefaya* movement to overcome their severe ideological differences was the result of a long process of rapprochement during the 1990s, which came after a confrontational period that dated back to the 1970s. The founding fathers of Kefaya belong to the ‘1970s generation’, where the students’ movement was highly politicised and had significantly contributed to the political struggles of the period, as discussed in chapter three. The polarisation between the leftists and the Islamists, which was enforced and supported by President Sadat and later by President Mubarak, had significantly undermined the Egyptian opposition and strengthened the ruling regimes. The opposition started to realise,

²³⁹ The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) had participated in the demonstrations with a big rally, where the son of the president, Gamal Mubarak, and other prominent members of the NDP gave speeches in support of Iraq and against the Anglo- American invasion.

²⁴⁰ George Ishaq, co-founder of Kefaya and a political activist who was also involved in Mohamed el-Baradei campaign for presidency in 2010. My interview was in his house in downtown Cairo, June 2010.

²⁴¹ Al-Wassat Party had only been approved as a legitimate political party after the 25 January revolution in 2011.

particularly in the 1990s²⁴², that their fragmentation and ideological disarray had only benefited the ruling regime. The participants agreed that Egypt's deteriorating situation required the unity of political opposition and the creation of new means of expression. The main aim of the movement's establishment was represented in its slogan '*la lil tamdeed, la lil tawreth*', ('No for re-election, no for succession'), a cry against the re-election of President Mubarak for a fifth term and/ or the succession of power from Mubarak the father to his son Gamal. The movement name, *Kefaya* or enough, was directed at President Mubarak, his son Gamal and the corrupted system they helped create. *Kefaya*'s primary goal was to redefine Egyptian public spaces and challenge the repertoire of these public spaces, which hampered political activities from taking place in Egyptian streets. The ruling regime identified the protests of *Kefaya* in the same way it portrayed the violent activities of militant Islamists. For the Mubarak regime, all political activities in Egyptian public spaces were considered a threat to the Egyptian national security, and hence public spaces should be securitised.

Kefaya was not only struggling for political and social rights but was primarily struggling to re-define space. According to George Ishaq, the *Kefaya* movement succeeded in achieving three things: 1) it successfully broke the barrier of fear from the regime and its huge security apparatus by demonstrating publicly in Egyptian streets 2) it also retained the right to protest and demonstrate regardless of the emergency law imposed on Egypt for over 30 years; *Kefaya* members protested in the street without retaining permission from security forces²⁴³, and finally 3) *Kefaya* managed to claim the right to criticise the president, which was considered a taboo (G. Ishaq 2010, Pers. Comm., 5 June). According to Ahmed Bahaa Shabaan, a co-founder of *Kefaya* who was a leading student activist during the seventies, 'the street is the only way to reach the people... political parties are useless, they have made deals with the regime' (A. Shabaan 2010, Pers. Comm., 12 June). The struggle of *Kefaya* to redefine Egyptian public spaces came in a significant national, regional and international moment. On the national Egyptian level, the unprecedented rise of

²⁴² According to Manar Shorbagy (2007), the roots of this dialogue started in the early 1980s when Sadat imprisoned Egyptian intellectuals from both the left and the right and continued in the 1990s following the Islamists unprecedented success in the syndicates. (p.181)

²⁴³ According to Ishaq, *Kefaya* was working according to the constitution, particularly article 54, which protects the right to protest, as long as the time and the place are advertised. *Kefaya* had never got permission from the security, but had published information about the protests in *al-Masry al-Youm* independent newspaper.

Gamal Mubarak under the umbrella of the resurrected ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), and the emphasis of the importance of institutional reforms as a gateway to political and democratic reforms, alarmed Egyptian intellectuals and activists that political parties and conventional political platforms could not be used to push for real political reforms. Political parties had been controlled by the regime since the restoration of political parties in 1976 under President Sadat. The rise of the NDP and its rhetoric that reduced political reform efforts into a set of mere institutional reforms, limiting political activities into legal/ licensed political parties, pushed political activists to search for new channels to be politically active. 'People want to do politics... but political parties are weak', George Ishaaq exclaimed, and 'where should those people go, they had to find a place for themselves'. Shabaan stresses that the Mubarak regime censored and blocked all other channels for anti-regime supporters to reach the people, including universities, mosques, mass-media, trade unions, and so forth. *Kefaya's* attempt to reach out to the Egyptian people through the use of the street turned it into a threat to the ruling regime, as Shabaan puts it 'the street is the key test for the regime to survive' (A. Shabaan 2010, Pers. Comm., 12 June).

George Ishaaq stresses that *Kefaya's* presence in the streets was very selective. The choice of dates and places gave more weight to *Kefaya's* protests. For instance, the first street protest for Kefaya was a silent one, with protestors sticking a yellow slip on their mouths with '*Kefaya*', meaning enough', written at the top of it. The protest took place on 12 December 2004 (coinciding with the international Human Rights Day) and was in front of the Egyptian High Court of Justice. For Ishaaq, the 'international Human Rights Day and the High Court of Justice offered the protestors some sort of protection'. In other words, members of the *Kefaya* movement were capitalising on the spatial agency that particular spaces retained and which conferred them with the agency to challenge the dominant spatial routines and provided them with 'protection' from the ruling regime's policing. As Ishaaq illustrates, the space in front of the Egyptian High Court of Justice had its own sanctity and its own spatial routines that forced the Egyptian police to refrain from repressing the protestors. The level of respect that the Egyptian judicial system enjoyed, both domestically and internationally (Rutherford 2008: 32-42), protected the space of the court from the ruling regime's intervention and policing. In other words, the space in front of the

Egyptian High Court of Justice represented a safe space for protestors to undermine the policing of Egyptian spaces and their securitisation. The Mubarak regime realised that the price of challenging the repertoire of the public spaces in front of the court would be too high and might undermine the ruling regime itself, and hence it was compelled to limit its policing measures.

While the space of the Egyptian High Court of Justice allowed the protestors to relatively undermine the policing of Egyptian public spaces, the ruling regime developed new measures to reinforce the securitisation and policing of Egyptian public spaces. In May 2005 *Kefaya* called for street protests against proposed amendments of the Egyptian constitution (Al-Sayyid 2009: 53). *Kefaya* members chose *Tahrir* Square. *Kefaya* was capitalising on the spatial routines that were associated with *Tahrir* Square, in which the square was the symbol of Egyptian resistance against the Nasser regime during the protests of 1968 and against the Sadat regime in the protests of 1972 and 1977, as discussed in chapters three and four. Moreover, the physical characteristics of *Tahrir* Square would empower *Kefaya* protests and allow for a wider mobilisation. The square is located at the heart of downtown Cairo, linking the various districts of Egypt, which would guarantee a high level of visibility for the protests. While the numbers of protestors did not exceed a few hundred, police agents exceeded 2,000 (G. Ishaq 2010, Pers. Comm., 12 June). The police violently repressed and sexually harassed female protestors. The ruling regime not only used uniformed police officers but used plain-clothes police and thugs. The ruling regime's use of repressive measures by both uniformed police and plain-clothes officers reinforced the identification of Egyptian public spaces as dangerous spaces. The ruling regime's aim was to make the protestors feel policed whenever they protest in Egyptian streets. Protestors were not sure who was affiliated with the police and who was protesting with them, which enhanced the ruling regime's policing of Egyptian public spaces. The presence of thugs and plain-clothes security agents during the protests led to an internalisation of the ruling regime's securitisation of public spaces.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ See Foucault (1995) on the internalisation of the gaze of power. Foucault discusses the impact of the structure of the panopticon on the internalisation of the gaze of power and the internalised surveillance that prisoners experienced. Technological innovations, like the CCTV, represent a development of Foucault's analysis. The Egyptian police did not use technological innovations, nor reproduce Foucault's panopticon. Rather, the Egyptian regime reinforced constant policing of Egyptian public

Until the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution on the 25 January 2011, the *Kefaya* movement was criticised and accused by many critics. The criticisms came from the ideologues of the ruling regime as well as from intellectuals and political activists. Roz al-Youssef, an Egyptian newspaper that was controlled by the ruling regime, had criticised *Kefaya* calling its members a ‘bunch of Communists and Leftists’ (Roz al-Youssef, 18 June 2004). President Mubarak himself criticised the movement in an interview with Le Figaro, saying that it was led by foreign forces (Le Figaro, 25 March 2005), something that was reiterated in the state owned newspapers and media (Sayyid Ahmed and Ragab 2005). The *Kefaya* movement and its prominent members were not only attacked politically and morally, but also physically. Abdel Wahab el-Misseri, an Egyptian well respected intellectual who was a professor at Cairo University and a founding member of *Kefaya*, was kidnapped with his wife by paid thugs and were left alone in the desert following their participation in a *Kefaya* demonstration against high prices in January 2008 (Donia al-Watan, 20 Jan. 2008). Abdelhaleem Qandeel, another key member of *Kefaya*, who became its coordinator, was kidnapped by thugs, beaten and was left naked in the desert. These incidents were meant to emphasise that the streets were insecure for political activities against the ruling regime and hence reinforced the securitisation of Egyptian public spaces. Nevertheless, and regardless of Mubarak’s regime strategies to de-stabilise public spaces, *Kefaya* managed to open up and create new spaces for political activities. *Kefaya* succeeded in ‘opening the street to the people, even before the Muslim Brothers’ (G. Ishaq 2010, Pers. Comm. 12 June). *Kefaya*’s primary aim was captured in the movement’s main slogan ‘*La lil tamdeed, la lil tawreth*’, ‘no for re-election, no for succession’. For many, the movement lost its raison d’être in 2005 when President Mubarak was re-elected for a fifth term in the first multi-candidate elections with an 87% majority²⁴⁵. This led critics to declare the decline of the movement’s momentum and the sunset of its role. Even leading members of *Kefaya* itself announced that the

spaces through infiltrating protests with agents who represent authority but looked like protestors, which created confusion amongst the protestors, making them constantly suspicious while protesting in public spaces.

²⁴⁵ For criticisms to Kefaya movement see International Crisis Group (2005), Reforming Egypt: In Search of a Strategy, Middle East/North Africa Report, No.46, October 4th.

movement should be considered dead²⁴⁶. The internal splits inside the movement became public and a general feeling that *Kefaya* was dying became dominant²⁴⁷.

Nevertheless, *Kefaya* succeeded in challenging the dominant repertoire of Egyptian public spaces as being dangerous spaces, which inspired other groups in society, especially professional syndicates and trade unions, to re-define Egyptian public spaces as spaces for resistance. Since the start of *Kefaya*'s street actions groups of professionals were formed and took to the streets of Cairo including doctors, teachers, artists and writers, university professors, judges and, most significantly, workers who succeeded in creating spaces to stage their claims and demands for more rights. The strongest of these groups were the workers. What *Kefaya* did was to re-define the streets as public spaces of resistance.²⁴⁸ George Ishaq describes these protests in the street as 'the spirit of *Kefaya*'. What *Kefaya* failed to achieve, however, was to expand public spaces of resistance beyond Cairo and mobilise them in other cities. This was almost impossible to achieve given the harsh security measures against *Kefaya* members especially since the spring of 2007. Ishaq confessed that the movement did not have a strategic plan or long term vision, and they were unable to spread *Kefaya*'s spirit in all Egyptian cities. Furthermore, the images of 100 members of *Kefaya* being surrounded by 1000 members of the para-military riot police, or the Central Security Forces (CSF), reflected the security measures taken by the regime to disrupt the rise of any protests against Mubarak's regime in the public spaces. The need for other spaces that were more secure and less expurgated became urgent. This urgent need was fulfilled with the rise of virtual spaces in Egypt, which granted political activists accessible spaces that were more secure, and which represented the seeds of resistance to the ruling regime's securitisation of Egyptian public spaces.

²⁴⁶ See Hani Anan, a leading member in *Kefaya* declaring it dead, quoted in Joseph S. Mayton, AHN, available on Ikhwan Website: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=1490&ref=search.php>

²⁴⁷ According to George Ishaq, initially there were no divisions within *Kefaya* till political trends invaded the movement. Ishaq argues that the Karama Party of Arab nationalist tendencies (under formation) played a negative role inside *Kefaya* as they tried to control the movement and use it as a platform to publicise their own platform.

²⁴⁸ *Kefaya* had established the committee for public service, *lagnet al'amal algamahiri*, which was responsible for going to different areas in Egypt to make connections with people and spread awareness about the importance of political reform and of taking to the streets to express oneself.

Resistance within the Securitisation Pattern: The 2011 Revolution

Seeds of Resistance: A Secured Virtual Public Space?

The struggle over the making of Egyptian public spaces, most notably in the streets of downtown Cairo between political activists and the regime was a struggle over re-defining Egyptian streets as political spaces and not spaces for mere survival. *Kefaya*'s peaceful demonstrations and sit-ins granted political opposition of all shades visibility within the regime's 'hazardous' space of the street. Nevertheless, the harsh security measures against street activists, being evident in the massive presence of para-military riot police and the excessive use of violence, limited the presence of political activists in the streets and forced them to search for alternative spaces to express their rage against the regime. Technological innovations, represented in the rise of blogs, twitter and social networks like Facebook, offered those wandering activists an alternative space to express their political views, which was relatively more secure. Although politics had found its way into the Egyptian blogosphere since 2003, when blogging on the Iraqi war inspired many Egyptians to express and document their feelings and thoughts about the war (Gordon Robison 2005), the political use of blogs flourished in 2005 in response to the regime's crackdown on street actions. The blogosphere was seen as a refuge for political activists, but also a space to report on the regime's abuses in the street and hence expose its role in destabilising Egyptian public spaces in order to control them. Nevertheless, the relationship between the street and the Internet was of complementary nature. The influence that the *Kefaya* movement had over early bloggers and vice versa was significant. As Tom Isherwood puts it, 'it would be difficult to explain the origins of blogging in Egypt without discussing *Kefaya*, and it would be hard to explain the success of *Kefaya* without discussing blogging' (Tom Isherwood 2008: 4). Since the beginning the *Kefaya* movement was a platform for political activists of different political orientations, which exposed young bloggers to intense intellectual debates.

On the other hand, bloggers were circulating information about *Kefaya*'s protests and helped popularise the movement and its demonstrations and sit-ins (Tom Isherwood

2008: 5)²⁴⁹. It could be argued that bloggers helped increase the visibility of *Kefaya*'s penetration to spaces of authority, and eventually allowed them more participants and hence more presence in the regime's public spaces. More importantly, bloggers provided *Kefaya* and street activities with some sort of protection that was lacking before. By posting videos, pictures, and articles about the regime's excessive use of force against unarmed protestors in the street, the bloggers were exposing the regime's violence to a wider public audience, both in Egypt and abroad. The aim was to put pressure on the regime both domestically and internationally, and increase the price the regime might have to pay in case such brutalities were repeated. Moreover, it was meant to expand public spaces of resistance that were created virtually, with the hope of reaching out to Egyptian physical spaces. This was evident in the bloggers' coverage of the sexual harassment of female protesters against proposed constitutional amendments that would allow multicandidate presidential elections in *Tahrir* Square in May 2005, which was highly ignored in the conventional mass media (Daily Star, 31 May 2005). Egyptian bloggers were posting articles, pictures and videos that showed the brutality of Mubarak's security forces. In spite of its limited visibility and accessibility at its early stages, blogs were growing fast in response to the growing number of Internet users in Egypt. By the end of 2009, Internet users had reached 20.1 million users in Egypt²⁵⁰. This significant penetration rate was possible because of PM Ahmed Nazif government's orientations to liberalise the economy and attract foreign investment. In 2002, Ahmed Nazif introduced the 'Free Internet' initiative, according to which access to the Internet was easier and cheaper. In 2004, Suzan Mubarak, Egypt's first lady at the time, introduced the 'PC for Each House' initiative (Eid 2006: 136). Such initiatives were primarily meant to reflect the image that the Egyptian regime claimed for itself as being modernising and progressive.

According to Courtney Radsch, the evolution of the Egyptian blogosphere has gone through three stages: the experimentation stage (2003-2005), the activist stage (2005-

²⁴⁹ Also see Courtney Radsch (2008).

²⁵⁰ International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2011), 'ICT Statistics: Internet', available online: <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ICTEYE/Indicators.aspx#> (accessed 19/04/2011).

2006)²⁵¹, and the diversification and fragmentation stage (2006-2008) (Radsch 2008). In the experimentation phase, bloggers were limited in number and had the technical knowledge to blog and represent the bloggers elite, who were inspired by blogs on the Iraqi war. The activist phase, however, was the most crucial, as bloggers turned into activists, and activists turned into bloggers. The final stage of the evolution of the blogosphere witnessed a diversification and fragmentation, where Salafis, women, the youth and others started blogging on issues ranging from women seeking marriage (*Ana 'ayza atgawez*, or I want to get married blog²⁵²), to religious preaching (*Ana Salafi*, or I am a Salafi).

The expansion of online activism represented a dilemma for the literature of the public space and the public sphere. Zizi Papacharissi (2002) discusses the impact of the Internet on our understanding of the public sphere. She rightly refers to the romanticism surrounding the notion of the public sphere being a sphere for political discussions that is open to everyone. Papacharissi investigates whether the Internet represent a public sphere in this ideal sense, and whether the Internet functions as an arena for political discussions that is open to everyone. For her, the Internet facilitates political discussions but does not represent an ideal public sphere. On the other hand, Diana Saco (2002) argues that the Internet should be treated as a public space. Saco, who follows the footsteps of Lefebvre, considers the Internet a social space that is produced as a result of social relations. Saco stresses that the public space should not be confined to 'physical spaces'. Nevertheless, Saco also discussed the Internet as a public space with regard to democratic ideals. As discussed in chapter one, the notion of the public sphere and that of the public space are not two distinct categories that are separated from one another. The dynamism between the public sphere and the public space are manifested in the virtual space of the Internet. Political discourses are formulated within the various Internet platforms, which facilitates political discussions creating a virtual public sphere. At the same time, these political discussions create a political public space that is the result of contestations among the

²⁵¹ Blogging started in English in Egypt, and hence was confined to a particular social class and its message was primarily seeking an international audience. But after a few years, blogging in Arabic was booming and it was directed to an Egyptian audience of all social classes.

²⁵² Posts from the blog were published by Dar El-Shorouk as a book: Abdelal, Ghada (2008), *'Aiza Atgawez*, Cairo: Dar El-Shorouk. The book was very successful and El-Shorouk printed more than 7 editions in 4 years. These blogs, though apolitical, had popularised the blogosphere and pushed many Egyptian youths to use the Internet.

various political discourses, which is visible. More importantly, the virtual public space created as a result of the contestations between political discourses produces effects; it leads to the construction of political subjectivities and confers agency to political actors to alter the spatial routines. This dynamism between the public sphere and public space embodied in the virtual space of the Internet was manifested in the dynamism between the Egyptian blogosphere and street actions.

The dynamism between the blogosphere and the street has been evident since the beginning of political blogging in Egypt. The link between the online activism and offline street struggle had always been in the mind of online activists. *Kefaya* offered bloggers a platform to exercise their activism offline. And in February 2005, some of *Kefaya*'s bloggers initiated the Youth for Change Group, *Shabab min Agl al-Tagheer*, which was considered the youth wing for *Kefaya*. They organised various sit-ins and demonstrations and were seeking new ways of expressing dissent (Fahmi 2009: 96).²⁵³ Since the political rise of Gamal Mubarak, many speculations were on the rise that he might succeed his father. The NDP started propagating Gamal Mubarak as the representative of the Egyptian youth; he was being advertised as the new blood to an aging political system. The Egyptian youth, who were being marginalised and disenchanted from the political process, started to search for a place for themselves. They were searching for a platform to refute this representation of Gamal Mubarak; they did not want to see another Mubarak for the rest of their lives. The *Kefaya* movement offered the youth one platform, it managed to claim access to the regime's controlled public spaces and allowed the youth to do the same²⁵⁴. The establishment of the *al-Ghad* party by Ayman Noor in 2004 offered the youth another space to express their views and practice politics. Nevertheless, the youth were always dissatisfied with these spaces; they thought that the control of the regime over these spaces could not be ignored. They thought that these political movements only manoeuvred in the spaces that the regime had granted them²⁵⁵. Among these young

²⁵³ One innovative attempt was sweeping the mosque of Sayyida Zainab in Cairo 'Kans Elsayeda' with straw brooms as an act of seeking blessing against injustices of Mubarak's regime.

²⁵⁴ Blogging was part of the movements' tools to get their message of reform heard. The split between bloggers and *Kefaya* was in 2007, when *Kefaya* leaders did not do anything regarding the imprisonment of many bloggers.

²⁵⁵ An Egyptian activist told me that he joined the *Ghad* Party but left it because he thought that the leadership of the party was counting every step because they were afraid of the regime's prosecution. Personal interview, 11 January 2011, Cairo.

Egyptians who were part of both *Kefaya* and *al-Ghad* party at its early stages were Esraa Abdel Fattah, who was later known as the Facebook girl for her role in organising a nation-wide general strike on the 6 April 2008 on Facebook, and Ahmed Maher, a co-founder and the secretary general of the 6 April group.

Facebook offered young political activists a space that was visible and most importantly secure. Facebook users in Egypt reached 6,815,960 in April 2011²⁵⁶. In spite of the fact that not all of these users were political activists, many of them had been members of a group or two that were of a political nature, either out of belief or mere curiosity. Since its start in 2007, Egyptians used Facebook as a platform for political discussions. As a result of the development of Facebook functions which allowed group formation and event organisation, Egyptian political activists started using Facebook to organise political protests, demonstrations and strikes on the ground and not only in the virtual world. The first manifestation of the power of Facebook for Egyptian political activism came in March 2008, when Esraa Abdel Fattah, started a Facebook page to support the workers' strike in the Egyptian city of *al-Mahalla al-Kubra*, Egypt's textile industrial centre. The workers' movement in Egypt has been very active since 2005, in response to the privatisation policies of Ahmed Nazif's cabinet. In 2006, the number of strikes reached 222, and in December of the same year, a major strike took place in *Sherket al-Mahala*²⁵⁷ in *al-Mahalla al-Kubra*. The number of workers' strikes was on the rise after that, with 614 strikes in 2007 and more than 700 strikes in 2009 (Land Centre for Human Rights 2009). In 2008, the workers of *al-Mahalla al-Kubra* planned a massive strike on 6 April 2008 in response to the company's management failure to respond to their demands, particularly those related to a minimum wage, which also corresponded to the inflation rates and the rise in prices. The *Mahalla* workers' strike was aborted and failed to achieve its goal (Abdalla 2010, 20??). Nevertheless, political movements had benefited from the space opened up by *al-Mahalla* workers, and used it to expand the spaces of resistance against the regime. In March 2008, Ahmed Maher, a young Egyptian activist who was involved in *Kefaya*'s activities and *al-Ghad* party, called Esraa Abdel Fattah, whom he knew from *al-Ghad*, and told her that the youth should

²⁵⁶ Check Facebook Website: <http://www.checkfacebook.com/> (Country: Egypt).

²⁵⁷ Also known as *Sherket misr lel ghazl w al-naseeg* (Egypt's company for spinning and weaving) and is composed of 24,000 workers (the largest company in Egypt in terms of workers' size).

support the workers (Shapiro 2009). The aim was to make the workers' spaces of dissent more visible to reach many Egyptians regardless of their social class, education or political orientation. Esraa started a Facebook group, which urged Egyptians to stay at home on the 6 April in solidarity with the workers²⁵⁸. The Facebook group was planning one step towards civil disobedience in Egypt.²⁵⁹ Within a few days, the group membership had risen to 70,000 members, granting the group enormous visibility, not only from within Egypt but also from outside. Many of the Egyptian diaspora declared their solidarity with the 6 April strike, like the Egyptian diaspora in Europe (Al-Masry Al-Youm, 4 April 2008), which reflected the expansion of public spaces of resistance beyond Egyptian boundaries in countries that the Egyptian regime was trying to impress. This unprecedented visibility alarmed the Egyptian regime, which took all the necessary measures to prevent the strike. The Ministry of Interior warned Egyptian citizens of strict actions if they participated in street demonstrations. Moreover, civil servants and public sector employees were informed that they might lose their jobs if they were absent from work on the 6 April²⁶⁰. State owned newspapers also initiated a fierce campaign against the strike, calling whoever took part in it a traitor to the country. Moreover, only four days before the 6 April strike, the Egyptian parliament had passed a law to prohibit protests in religious institutions (Al-Masry Al-Youm, 3 April 2008).

The slogans of the 6 April group were very expressive of the struggle over Egyptian public spaces and the Mubarak securitisation pattern. The main slogan for the group was *khaleek bel beit* ('Stay at home'), in a call for the withdrawal from the regime's public spaces that were used for mere survival (going to work, moving from one place to another and so forth). At the same time, the group called for street demonstrations in 'all the squares of Egypt', in an attempt to transform Egyptian public spaces from being ones of survival into being ones of resistance. Although, the 6 April movement was calling for the withdrawal from the regime's public spaces, they sought to alter

²⁵⁸ Link to the original 6 April Facebook group set up in March 2008: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=9973986703>. Link to the new Facebook page (which allows more functions than: <http://www.facebook.com/shabab6april?ref=sgm>

²⁵⁹ One of the group's profile pictures depicts the Egyptian flag written on it '6 April... we are all staying at home... this is where civil disobedience starts'.

²⁶⁰ Even the workers' union, which is controlled by the regime, had urged workers not to participate in such strikes. Hussein Megawer, the head of the workers' union, had played a major role in curbing the workers' movement in Egypt through adopting the carrot and stick strategy.

the function and the characteristics of these public spaces, turning them into public spaces of resistance. The strength of the movement came through linking the socio-economic grievances with the political space to create a public space shared by all Egyptians. The slogans on the Facebook group covered a wide range of issues, from the deterioration of education, healthcare, and poverty to political repression and corruption. The figures below show some of these posters that were not only on the 6 April Facebook group but had been the profile picture of thousands of Egyptian Facebook users in Egypt and abroad.



Figure (10): The first poster from left urges university students not to go to university on the 6 April till they have a 'real' education. The second poster strikes a link between poverty and fear, the poster reads 'We will not be afraid, we cannot find bread' (Source: 6 April Facebook Page, April 2008)



Figure (11): These two different posters were spread throughout Facebook urging Egyptians to participate in the strike²⁶¹.

Although the strike was primarily addressing the Egyptian silent majority, various political movements took part in it including *Kefaya* and the Muslim Brotherhood. The majority of participants, however, came from the corps of disenchanted youth and frustrated workers. This was significant in the popularity of the strike both online and offline²⁶². It pushed many politicians like Mohamed el-Baradei, the former head of the IAEA to publicly support calls for change and urge President Mubarak to adopt democratic reforms.

More importantly, the strike revealed the impact of the virtual public space on street actions and the challenge it could pose to the ruling regime. The use of Facebook to organise political events became very popular. David Faris (2008) explains that Facebook represents a perfect tool for political activists to organise events on the

²⁶¹ Other pictures of the 6 April strike are available on the group's Facebook page: original group's Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=27044795716&set=o.9973986703&type=1>

²⁶² Organisers of the 6 April strike had transformed themselves into a youth movement demanding political change which organises political demonstrations and protests on the ground.

ground for three reasons. First, it reduces transaction costs as it makes joining political groups and events less hazardous and less costly. In other words, Facebook offers a more secure space for political activists. Second, Facebook reduces social distance as people across Egypt were able to join the 6 April strike Facebook page. Third, political groups on Facebook enjoy a high degree of resilience. As Ethan Zuckerman argues, political activism on Facebook benefits from what he calls ‘the cute-cat theory of digital activism’, where a repressive regime would not be able to block pages on political activism without blocking the pages of cat lovers, actors’ fans and other Facebook pages, which undermines the government’s international image (Zuckerman quoted in Shapiro 2009).

The success of Facebook as a visible and secure space for political activism pushed young activists to use it to express their rage against the ruling regime and organise nationwide political events. The most notable effort following the 6 April strike, and which paved the way for the Egyptian revolution, was the Facebook page ‘*Kolona Khaled Said*’ (‘We Are All Khalid Said’²⁶³) set up in 2009 in the memory of the 28 year old Egyptian from the city of Alexandria, who was tortured to death by two policemen after being allegedly linked to circulating a video on YouTube that showed police officers distributing drugs (Figure (12) shows Khalid Said’s picture).



Figure (12): Khalid Said, Victim of Police Brutality²⁶⁴

²⁶³ ‘We are All Khalid Said’ page on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/ElShaheed>

²⁶⁴ The profile picture of ‘We Are All Khalid Said’ Facebook page, the Arabic version, available from <http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=192760844107121&set=a.125821607467712.18408.104224996294040&type=1>

Wael Ghoneim, former Google head of marketing for the Middle East and North Africa, and Abdelrahman Mansour, an Egyptian online activist, set up the 'We are all Khalid Said' page to put public pressure on the Egyptian government to start an autonomous investigation that would punish the torturers. Wael and Abdelrahman's identities were kept anonymous till the outbreak of the 2011 revolution, to avoid police prosecution, a privilege that virtual activism allows. They published images of Khalid Said's dead body, showing his skull and jaws having been smashed. In a few weeks Khalid Said's case became a national one, arousing public antipathy against police brutality and the securitisation of Egyptian public spaces altogether. Through 'We are All Khalid Said' many nationwide protests against police brutality were organised, and members of the group showed solidarity with all victims of police torture. Directly before the revolution, the group organised protests in solidarity with Sayyid Belal, a Salafi Alexandrian that was tortured to death after refusing to confess that he was connected to the bombing of an Alexandrian church on New Year's Eve 2011. By supporting torture victims, regardless of their social class or political orientations, 'We Are All Khalid Said' managed to create a virtual public space against police brutality and challenge the securitisation of Egyptian public spaces through revealing the role of the police in turning Egyptian public spaces into dangerous spaces. The major message the group was trying to spread was 'we have to stand up against torture... it could be you next time'²⁶⁵.

With more than 500,000 members, the strength of the virtual public space against police brutality manifested in 'We Are All Khalid Said' was to be tested offline on 25 January 2011. Triggered by a successful Tunisian revolution that also started in response to police brutality, 'We Are All Khalid Said', supported by the 6 April movement and other Facebook groups, called for a mass-demonstration against police brutality and emergency law on 25 January, which coincided with the National Police Day of Egypt.

The campaign started in mid-January, shortly after Tunisian President Bin Ali fled the country after the massive street protests that swept Tunisia. 'We Are All Khalid Said'

²⁶⁵ This was one post on the 'We are all Khalid Said' Facebook page, urging people to participate in protests and demonstrations against police brutality and Habib el-Adly, the Minister of Interior.

Facebook page started posting posters and pictures urging people to take to the streets of Egypt to ‘return their stolen rights’ and to follow the footsteps of their Tunisian brothers (see figure (13)).



Figure (13): Posters showing that Egypt will follow the fate of Tunisia on 25 January (Source: We Are All Khalid Said Facebook Page).

The 6 April movement distributed more than 200,000 flyers urging people to take part in this massive street action. The most effective technique in urging people to take to the streets was posting pictures of Egyptians from various social classes and representing different age groups holding a paper disclosing their names and saying ‘I am taking to the street on 25 January’. This technique aimed at breaking the barrier of fear, where people from all over Egypt and abroad were urging their fellow Egyptians not to be afraid and re-claim their rights (See figure (14)). Such a technique was possible because it followed continuous efforts of creating a coherent discourse of resistance that was manifested virtually and spatially. Even more effective, was a YouTube video by a female 6 April activist, Asmaa Mahfouz, who urged Egyptians to join street demonstrations against poverty, police brutality, and injustices²⁶⁶. Mahfouz was encouraging Egyptians to undermine the securitisation of Egyptian public spaces.

²⁶⁶ Link to Asmaa Mahfouz’s YouTube Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpH1lZiw1ik>

On 25 January 2011, a hundred thousand Egyptians filled the streets towards *Tahrir* Square making it the symbol of the Egyptian Revolution.



Figure (14): Two Egyptians declaring that they are taking part in 25 January protests (Source: We Are All Khalid Said Facebook Page)²⁶⁷.

The Battle for *Tahrir*: The making of a revolutionary public space?

'We liberated Tahrir Square but it has also liberated us'

*Tamer Ashry, a filmmaker and Tahrir protestor*²⁶⁸

Regardless of the fact that the protests took place in almost every Egyptian city, the battles over the control of Cairo's *Tahrir* Square and the protestors' struggle to protect their presence in it against thugs and secret police attracted international attention, and *Tahrir* Square represented a symbol for the revolution, and above all, it revealed the dynamics of the securitisation pattern and the struggles surrounding it.

²⁶⁷ The pictures are taken from 'We Are All Khalid Said' Facebook page:
<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=159576570758882&set=a.157357257647480.28966.104224996294040&type=1>

²⁶⁸ T. Ashry 2012, Pers. Comm., July.

The Long March to Tahrir and the Tale of Two Public Spaces

On 25 January 2011, thousands of Egyptians took to the streets of downtown Cairo, transforming Egyptian public spaces to express their opposition to the Mubarak regime and its security apparatus. Protestors were primarily challenging the securitisation of public spaces imposed throughout Mubarak's 30 years of rule, and which turned Egyptian streets and squares into hazardous spaces. An Egyptian protestor said from *Tahrir* Square: 'this is the first time I feel that this is my country ... the first time I feel that this square belongs to me... I want everyone to join us (in *Tahrir* Square), it is very safe here, actually it is the safest place... don't be afraid'²⁶⁹. The protestor gives an image of the hijacking of *Tahrir* Square, as well as the whole of Egypt, by Mubarak's regime for more than 30 years. He expressed his happiness that the square finally belonged to him and that he was not afraid to express his political views publically in the street. This shows that the first obstacle that was confronting protestors in transforming Egyptian public spaces was fear, something that the virtual public space had helped break.

Tahrir Square is one of Egypt's most famous and most vital squares in downtown Cairo. Regardless of its historical and geographic importance, *Tahrir* Square has also a politically significant representation. The square connects vital state institutions that are located at the heart of the city, including the Egyptian Parliament with its two houses, Cabinet Offices, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the headquarter of the state owned television. Moreover, the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) headquarters building, a symbol of Mubarak's regime, overlooks the square. For many Egyptians, *Tahrir* is characterised by its dreadful traffic, it connects different parts of Cairo and is always jammed with cars and over-crowded buses. *Tahrir* is also seen as a symbol of the Egyptian state's bureaucracy and red-tape routine. *Mogama' al-Tahrir*, a giant building constituting various governmental administrative offices and departments at the centre of the square, became a symbol of the state's inefficiency, corruption and repressive powers. It had been represented in Egyptian movies, most notably the famous movie '*al-Irhab w al-Kabab*' ('Terrorism and Kebab steak') starring Adel Imam, Egypt's most famous comedian,

²⁶⁹ An Egyptian protestor, Aljazeera Arabic Live Coverage of the Egyptian Revolution, Egypt speaks for itself, 28/01/2011.

and Yossra, telling a story of an ordinary Egyptian citizen who went to *Mogama' al-Tahrir* several times to sign some official paper work and turned into a terrorist as a result of his frustration. For long, *Tahrir* Square symbolised the state's authority, inefficiency, chaos, and unsuccessful urban planning strategies conducted by the various governments during the 30 year rule of President Mubarak²⁷⁰. These factors supported the view that *Tahrir* Square represented a perfect destination for protests against the ruling regime, its corruption, and its oppression.

At the early stages of planning for the mass protests, members of the 'We Are All Khalid Said' Facebook group that sparked the revolution²⁷¹ did not name *Tahrir* Square as the main destination for protests. Members were discussing whether to organise non-moving demonstrations or marches towards vital locations in Cairo. They agreed to gather in certain places until their number was big enough to march to popular streets and squares in Cairo. In order to manipulate central security forces to disrupt their movement, protestors spread false rumours on their meeting locations. The protestors claimed that they were gathering in posh aristocratic areas where Cairo's elites are located. The police thought the locations were correct and gathered in large numbers in these false places. Nevertheless, protestors gathered in lower and lower middle class areas and started to ask people sitting in coffee shops '*ahawy*' and in the streets to join them²⁷². They avoided slogans on democracy and focused on economic and social demands, like demanding a minimum level for salaries, subsidies, a better healthcare system and so forth. The organisers of the protests were themselves surprised with the huge turnout and were impressed by the number of people who kept joining them while marching in the streets of Cairo's poor areas.

As Sally Toma, one of the protests' organisers said 'We did not have a clear plan that *Tahrir* would be the symbol of our revolution'²⁷³. Sally said that the number of protestors kept increasing and they all marched towards the key streets of downtown

²⁷⁰ Elshahed (2011) argues that Mubarak's urban planning was primarily meant to discourage democracy and limit the spaces where people meet, mingle, gather and share ideas. Elshahed highlighted one of Mubarak's policies to undermine the possibility for public meetings in *Tahrir*, which had at its roots since Sadat's rule to transform a huge part of the square into a parking garage, something that the 25 revolution had brought to an end.

²⁷¹ We are all Khalid Said Facebook page, link to the Arabic page <http://www.facebook.com/ElShaheed>

²⁷² Political Activists in Tahrir, Aljazeera Live Coverage of the Egyptian Revolution, 4/2/2011.

²⁷³ Sally Toma, Aljazeera Arabic Live coverage of the Egyptian revolution, 3/2/2011.

Cairo, which were also very close to their gathering starting points. This particularly reflects the spatial agency of *Tahrir* Square; although the protestors did not plan to move to *Tahrir* Square, it seemed as if ‘the square was calling them’²⁷⁴. After the great turnout on the 25 January’s peaceful demonstrations, protest organisers, especially the administrators of the Facebook group ‘We are All Khalid Said’ and ‘6 April youth movement’ and other Twitter users, called for a mass demonstration all over Egypt on Friday 28 January after the Friday prayers, in what they called ‘*gom’et el-ghadab*’ (‘The Friday of Rage’). After realising the importance of Facebook, Twitter and other social network websites, the Egyptian security apparatus replied by blocking these sites completely in Egypt in the days following the 25 January demonstrations. They started by blocking Twitter²⁷⁵, then Facebook, and there were rumours that the government might shut down the Internet service in Egypt. The behaviour of the Egyptian government shows that this virtual public space represented a threat to the ruling regime. The secured virtual public space of young Egyptians was a source of insecurity for the regime and hence it should be blocked.

The Egyptian youth were aware of the regime’s censorship tricks, and started a campaign to protect their spaces. They started alerting each other to use ‘proxy websites’ where they could access the blocked websites²⁷⁶. They started circulating messages regarding the new protests. Here is an example of one of the messages being circulated on Blackberry Messenger (BBM): “National announcement: Please let EVERYONE in Egypt know that we will be doing mass protests on Friday after Friday prayers (mid-day) ALL OVER Egypt. Please let everyone know now before the government closes Facebook and other sites. Twitter remains closed in Egypt”²⁷⁷. By the evening of 27 January, the Egyptian government had ordered all Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to cut their service throughout Egypt. By this the government managed to block the Internet completely, transforming Egypt into a

²⁷⁴ Anonymous Protestor, Pers. Comm., March 2011.

²⁷⁵ On the Egyptian government’s blockage of twitter, <https://twitter.com/#!/twitterglobalpr/status/30063209247408128>
<http://news.techworld.com/applications/3258175/egyptian-regime-blocks-twitter-after-national-protests/>

²⁷⁶ Nawar Negm, an Egyptian activist, had accused the Egyptian government for being stupid and outdated for not realising that blocking Twitter and Facebook is useless seeing that proxy websites (alternative websites for Facebook and Twitter) were being used by all activists. Aljazeera Arabic Satellite Channel, 26/1/2011.

²⁷⁷ I received this message on my BBM on January 26, 2011 at least three times, from different Egyptian friends, which shows how widespread its content was.

black hole. Moreover, text messages and Blackberry Messenger services were also disrupted. The regime not only restricted access to the virtual public spaces of Facebook and Twitter, that proved to be accessible and open to those who were technologically literate, but the regime decided to shut them down completely²⁷⁸. (See figures 15 & 16).

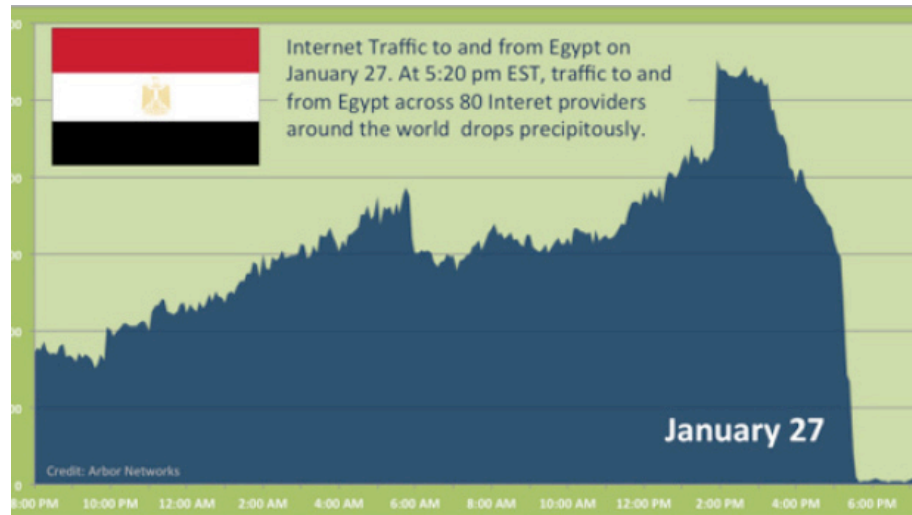


Figure (15): Shutting down the Internet in Egypt on 27 January (Source: Arbor Networks)²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ The Egyptian government decision to shut down the Internet had been widely reported, see for instance: Techworld: CBN News: http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-501465_162-20029874-501465.html, New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/29/technology/internet/29cutoff.html>, Telegraph: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/8288163/How-Egypt-shut-down-the-internet.html>, The Guardian: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2011/jan/28/egypt-cuts-off-internet-access>, Financial Times: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/08dbe398-2abb-11e0-a2f3-00144feab49a.html#axzz1DzhSmqlV> (All accessed 30/1/2011).

²⁷⁹ Available online from CBS News: http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-501465_162-20029874-501465.html (accessed 30/1/2011).

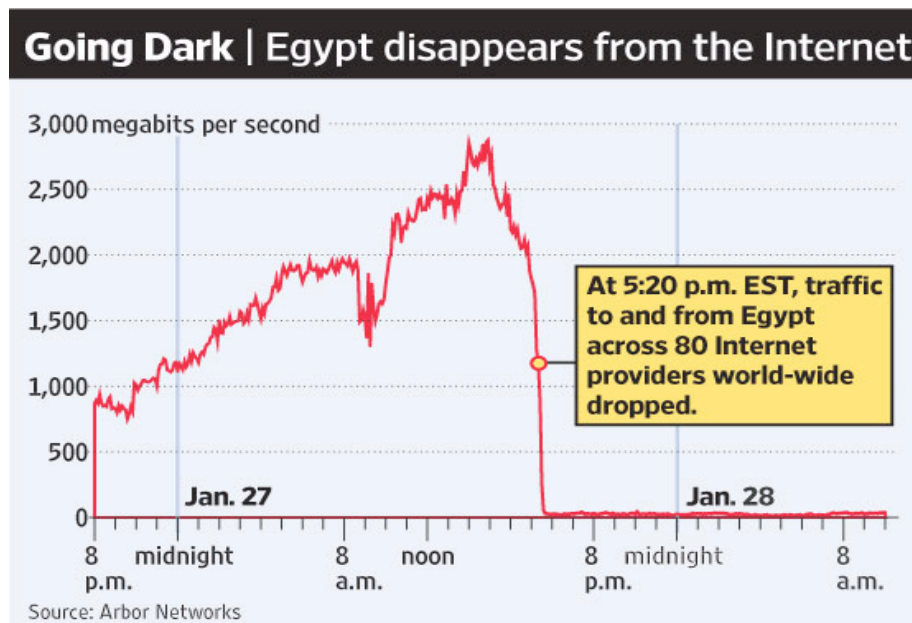


Figure (16): Egypt's disappearance from the Internet (Source: Arbor Networks)²⁸⁰

By shutting down Internet services in Egypt, the regime made people more determined to take to the streets of Egypt to express their views and secure a physical platform for their rights' claims. As one protester said amid the regime's blockage of the Internet: 'what a stupid government, what a stupid regime... by blocking the Internet they are forcing youth to go to the streets... they blocked their means of communications and now they have nothing but the street'²⁸¹. Another protestor who participated in the revolution seems to agree with this, saying on BBC Arabic 'we were called the youth of the Facebook, the "click it" generation saying that we just click on the mouse to show support on a Facebook page... when the government decided to block the Internet, we had no choice but to join street protests'²⁸². This was confirmed later by Ismail el-Shaeer, the Minister of Interiors assistant for Cairo security, who said during the investigations on violence against protestors that "(the strategy of blocking the internet and mobile network) was counterproductive and pushed people to take to the streets" (al-Shaeer, quoted in Al-Masry Al-Youm 19 April 2011). Moreover, protestors were joined by their families as taking to the streets

²⁸⁰ Available online from blog: http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_VB5qje4zQTA/TU6M24nJPmI/AAAAAAAAADnc/PjzqVGIC0hY/s1600/Egypt+Internet.jpg (accessed 30/1/2011).

²⁸¹ An Egyptian protestor, on Aljazeera Arabic Live coverage, 27 January 2011.

²⁸² An Egyptian protestor, on BBC Arabic, 21 February 2011.

seemed the only way for parents to protect their angry children who were persistent in taking part in the protests.

Although the regime's decision to block the Internet was primarily to block the virtual public space and prevent the protestors' organisational tools, it also aimed at restricting the visibility of the revolutionary public space and hampering the visibility of *Tahrir* Square. After the first two days of protests, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube were full of pictures and videos showing the violence of police forces against the protestors. The videos coming from Suez and Sinai were the bloodiest, showing footage of a 22 year old protestor being killed by security forces in *Abu Zwaïd* in Sinai, which was broadcasted by the Associated Press, and was widely circulated online among Egyptians²⁸³. It was not a matter of coincidence that Internet services had been completely shut down after the wide circulation of this video. The video, which showed the brutality of the police, was condemned by the Egyptian youth, who became more determined to join the planned 'Friday of Rage', while confirming the peaceful nature of the protests by chanting '*selmeya selmeya*' (peaceful peaceful).

In its battle to obscure the revolutionary public space in Egypt, and in *Tahrir* square in particular, the regime adopted unprecedented restrictions on international media reporting from Egypt. In the early days of the protests, the Arabic speaking Qatari-based channels of Al-Jazeera suffered massive disruptions, and were removed from the Egyptian Satellite NileSat. Al-Jazeera's bureaus all over Egypt were shut down, the licences of its reporters were cancelled and their transmission equipment was confiscated (Lawrence 2011). These actions were taken by the regime in response to Al-Jazeera's around the clock coverage of the unfolding events of the Egyptian revolution. Since day one of the revolution, Al-Jazeera was broadcasting the violence of the police against peaceful protestors. Although Al-Jazeera was not the only news satellite channel that was broadcasting the events in Egypt, the Egyptian regime's reactions against it drew wide attention seeing that it was the only Arabic speaking channel that managed to 'capture the hopes of the crowds gathering on the streets of Cairo' (Ibid). Several satellite channels substituted their programmes with Al-Jazeera

²⁸³ The Associated Press video showing a man being shot by police in Sinai on 26 January <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhfplGrdl7g> (accessed 27/1/2011).

streaming while the latter struggled to secure alternative frequencies for live streaming (Ibid)²⁸⁴.

Regardless of all restrictions and the cat-and-mouse game between Al-Jazeera and the Egyptian regime, Al-Jazeera continued to broadcast live with videos and pictures from all over Egypt. One protestor commented on the regime's decision to shut down Al-Jazeera bureaus in Egypt by saying: 'They have stopped the reporters of Al-Jazeera from reporting to the world their crimes... today we are all reporters for Al-Jazeera'.²⁸⁵ The protestor's words reflect the persistence to keep the visibility of the unfolding events in *Tahrir* Square and in other places in Egypt. Maintaining the visibility of the new public space created in *Tahrir* was important for the continuity of the revolution and the security of the revolutionaries. In doing so, protestors got in contact with whoever they knew from Al-Jazeera staff in Egypt and started to give live telephone interviews and eye-witness accounts of the unfolding events. Al-Jazeera also received videos and pictures from protestors showing the brutality of police forces against protestors and broadcasted them without hesitation. The worst of these videos were coming from Cairo and Alexandria, where police cars were stepping over protestors killing and injuring them, and where snipers were shooting protestors in the head²⁸⁶. The regime's insistence on maintaining the hazardous nature of Egyptian public spaces had only fuelled the protestors' determination in protecting *Tahrir* Square turning it into a secure public space. Moreover, and in a strong refusal to the Mubarak regime's strategies, protestors in *Tahrir* Square set up a giant TV screen in the middle of the square to broadcast Al-Jazeera's live coverage of the revolution. This was important to confirm the sovereignty of protestors over *Tahrir*, challenging the regime's decision to shut down Al-Jazeera by broadcasting its programmes in *Tahrir* Square.

Al-Jazeera was not the only channel that suffered from the regime's repressive strategies. Most foreign reporters were harassed and their transmission equipment was seized. The regime sought to make *Tahrir* Square less visible by removing all

²⁸⁴ The channels that had replaced their programmes with those of Al-Jazeera are: the London based Al-Hiwar, and the Palestinian al-Aqsa.

²⁸⁵ Al-Jazeera Live Coverage of the Egyptian Revolution, 30/1/2011.

²⁸⁶ Video showing the vehicles of Central Security Forces (CSF) stepping over protestors in Tahrir Square, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dm-hfoglBcC> (accessed 3/2/2011).

cameras, even the small ones that were placed in foreign reporters' rooms in The Hilton *Ramsis* that overlooks *Tahrir* Square. Another technique of hampering the visibility of the revolutionary public space used by the regime was not only to restrict and block international media from reporting, but also to propagate a counter image or representation of the revolutionary public space. While making use of state owned television, the regime started a campaign to alter the representation of the public space from a revolutionary one to a public space that had been penetrated by foreign powers. Protestors were being portrayed on state television as a small group of Egyptians who did not represent the majority of the Egyptian people and who worked as secret agents to foreign powers to destabilise the Egyptian political system. In a prominent talk-show on *al-Mihwar* channel (privately owned but used by the regime) a woman claimed that she received training from the foreign powers of Iran, Israel, US, Hizbullah and Hamas and was given money to take part in the protests²⁸⁷.

State owned television had also shown actors who supported President Mubarak and who urged protestors to leave *Tahrir* Square and go home. Samah Anwar, an Egyptian actress, was quoted saying that she 'sees no problem in burning all the protestors in *Tahrir* Square'. Another Egyptian comedian, Talaat Zakareya gave a televised interview in which he said: 'of course you know what is happening in *Tahrir* Square... there are men and women sleeping together... there is dancing, drugs and full sexual relations.'²⁸⁸ Moreover, the state-owned television was focusing on the images of pro-Mubarak protests, while ignoring *Tahrir* Square completely. It was clear that the Egyptian state owned television had differentiated between two public spaces; the corrupted one in *Tahrir* Square, where all the spoilers and the foreign secret agents gathered and the other public space which was the one that supported Mubarak's regime, where honest and rational Egyptians who loved their country and knew its interest gathered. The Pro-Mubarak public space was located in *Moustafa Mahmoud* Square, another square in *Mohandeseen*, which was not too far away from *Tahrir*.

²⁸⁷ It was revealed later that this woman was a journalist in state controlled Roz-Al Youssef.

²⁸⁸ Talaat Zakareya, in an interview with Ahmed Shobeir, on Kora TV., 9/2/2011, available online: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDDJUYyILmY> (accessed 17/2/2011).



Figure (17) Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians marching the Qasr al-Nil Bridge that leads to Tahrir Square on 28 January 2011 in '*gom'et el-ghadab*' ('Friday of Rage') (Source: Rassd News on Facebook)²⁸⁹.



Figure (18): Millions of Egyptians gathering in Tahrir Square on 8 February 2011, demanding Mubarak to step down (Source: Jonathan Rashad).

²⁸⁹ Rassd News on Facebook is one of the new forms of citizen journalism that emerged in Egypt during the revolution to counter the ruling regime's manipulative reporting.

This tale of two public spaces, that was both virtual and physical, managed to split Egyptian public opinion outside of *Tahrir* Square over the revolution. Yasmine, a 26 year old mother who participated in the protests in Tahrir Square and who was using Facebook to convince her friends to join her and her husband in Tahrir said ‘I was so sad from my friends who are well educated... I cannot believe that they believed the state owned media... I cannot believe that a sensible human being can believe that those who are risking their lives in *Tahrir* are being manipulated by foreign powers’²⁹⁰. Yasmine, who is a graduate of the political science department at Cairo University, mentioned that her biggest shock was not what is being propagated on the state owned media, but rather that some people believed it. Nadeen, another 26 year old scholar, a graduate of the same department as Yasmine, had a different view of the events. She said: ‘of course there is someone behind all of this... it is just impossible that a Facebook page does all of this... there is certainly a conspiracy behind this... and all what Al-Jazeera shows is exaggerated’²⁹¹.

Protestors in *Tahrir* Square used various techniques to defy the public space of authority, which was created and supported by Mubarak’s regime. One of these techniques was the use of jokes, street comedy plays, signs and Facebook groups. For instance, state owned television accused the protestors in *Tahrir* of working for foreign countries and said that some protestors were being rewarded with a KFC meal in order to stay in *Tahrir* Square. In response to this, protestors started holding signs saying ‘KFC is closed stupid, there is a revolution going on’, and ‘Who took my KFC meal?’ They also set up a food section in *Tahrir* that offered donated food like bread, cheese, Egyptian beans ‘*foul*’ and other Egyptian low income meals, yet they put a sign saying ‘welcome to our KFC’, in a mock scene of what was being propagated about the square and life there²⁹². These jokes and signs aimed at undermining the regime²⁹³ and its spaces of authority; they showed the regime and the state owned

²⁹⁰ Yasmine, a protestor from Tahrir Square, Pers. Comm., 20/2/2011 (I have changed the name for the protection of the interviewee).

²⁹¹ Nadeen, a political science graduate, Pers. Comm., 10/2/2011 (I have changed the name for the protection of the interviewee).

²⁹² Protestors also used Facebook, Twitter and Youtube to spread various jokes against the regime and its manipulative television

²⁹³ See similar work on the political use of jokes in Syria, Lisa Wedeen (1999), *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*, Chicago: Chicago University Press. Wedeen was showing how jokes were being circulated in private, nevertheless, in Tahrir Square

television as liars and hypocrites. The humorous atmosphere in *Tahrir* Square was meant to undermine the ruling regime's portrayal of *Tahrir* as a dangerous place where thugs and 'foreign agents' prevailed. Regardless of their sense of humour, protestors were angry about their characterisation as 'foreign agents' who worked against the interests of their country, yet this did not alter their determination to stay in *Tahrir* until president Mubarak stepped down. They believed that holding onto *Tahrir* Square and the fall of Mubarak would prove that the regime was lying²⁹⁴.

The Police, the protestors and Tahrir Square

The struggle over *Tahrir* Square was not only a discursive confrontation. Although the use of mass media was very important for gaining visibility in the battle over *Tahrir* Square, gaining access and holding on to the physical space of *Tahrir* was essential. Since the virtual calls to take to the streets on January 25, the Egyptian Ministry of Interior was preparing for the protest day. Police forces were planning to prevent the planned demonstrations on 25 January by 3,000 paramilitary soldiers and 1,000 members of the secret police in Cairo alone. On January 28, thousands of protesters gathered after the Friday prayers in front of greater Cairo's key mosques and churches, and once their numbers exceeded 2,000, they marched through the streets of downtown Cairo heading towards the headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), the Ministry of Interior and the state owned television. The meeting point for these key governmental buildings and others was *Tahrir* Square. On January 27, prior to the 'Friday of Rage', messages were being circulated to confirm the peaceful and non-religious nature of the protests. One of these messages urged protestors to follow the demonstration instructions: "1) refrain from bringing any weapons to the demonstrations, 2) bring an Egyptian flag, 3) do not march towards *Tahrir* and other main gathering points unless the number of protestors is large enough, and 4) the demonstrations are completely peaceful and there is no place for spoilers, because this is our country and there is no place for spoilers in it²⁹⁵". Indeed, protestors were aware that winning access to the regime's controlled public spaces

the jokes are meant to be public to confirm the strength of their public space and to defy the spaces of the regime.

²⁹⁴ Yasmine, *Tahrir* protestor, personal interview, 20/2/2011

²⁹⁵ A Forwarded message to my BBM, received on January 26, 2011.

would only be possible through peaceful demonstrations. Moreover, the peaceful nature of the demonstrations would attract more people to join and hence the large number of protestors might force the police to back down peacefully.

Police forces were ordered to protect *Tahrir* Square from protestors that came from all over Cairo and numbered in thousands. Accordingly, '*qwat al-amn al-markazy*' (Central Security Forces (CSF)), were ordered to stop protestors from forming a mass-demonstration in *Tahrir* Square by any means. In spite of the fact that protests were generally peaceful, the police responded with tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons²⁹⁶, as protestors were to be stopped from reaching *Tahrir* Square by any means. The confrontations were dramatic over *Qasr al-Nil* Bridge, a key bridge in downtown Cairo that links areas in Giza with *Tahrir* Square. Police vehicles were seen on television stepping over unarmed protestors in a desperate attempt to divide them and hinder them from crossing to the other side of the bridge that leads to *Tahrir*. Regardless of their use of force, the police were unable to face the increasing numbers of the protestors who seemed to be determined to reach *Tahrir* and join their fellow protestors coming from other parts of Cairo. Within a couple of hours, police forces collapsed dramatically, where members of the Central Security Forces removed their police uniform and ran away from the protestors. The protestors declared their victory and joined forces in *Tahrir* Square chanting '*yasqot yasqot Hosni Mubarak*' ('Down down with Mubarak'), '*al-sha'b yurid Isqat al-Nizam*' ('the people want the fall of the regime') and '*irhal ya'ny imshy, yally mabtefhamshy*' ('leave means go, you who don't understand'). After confirming their control over *Tahrir* Square, which was marked by the complete disappearance of police forces from the square, military troops started to step in to fill the security vacuum that had surprised protestors themselves.

Furthermore, apart from their withdrawal from *Tahrir* Square, police forces left their posts all over Egypt, leaving the country with no security apparatus, which resulted in the escaping of criminals from prisons²⁹⁷. It was unclear whether police forces

²⁹⁶ It was revealed in the post-revolution investigations that live ammunition was used against protestors.

²⁹⁷ Police disappearance from all posts was reported on 30 January, and the military was unable to fill the security vacuum that followed. The military had urged people to help protect their lives and properties.

received a direct order to leave their posts, or whether they left because they lost contact with their superiors. Nevertheless, the message to the protestors was clear, protecting the anti-regime public space in *Tahrir* could only be fulfilled at the expense of one's home and family. Protestors were left with the choice of either staying in *Tahrir* Square or leaving the square and going back to their homes to protect their families. In other words, the public space of *Tahrir* was not secure as well as private spaces and hence protestors should make their choice. If the ruling regime was unable to turn *Tahrir* Square into a dangerous space, then it should turn all other Egyptian streets and squares into hazardous spaces, which would push the protestors to leave *Tahrir* Square. Unlike the regime's expectations, Egyptians opted for the first option and decided to protect their presence in *Tahrir* Square. At the same time, Egyptians across Egypt, who did not participate in the protests, felt betrayed by the ruling regime. They decided to protect their homes, as well as the homes of their fellow Egyptians in *Tahrir*²⁹⁸. Ordinary Egyptians organised themselves and formed '*legan sha'beya*' ('Public Committees') across Egypt. The public committees were to restore order and security, they were primarily formed to fill the security vacuum that resulted from the police disappearance and were armed with knives and sticks. They were formed in each and every neighbourhood in Egypt, and were composed of male residents of the neighbourhoods that they were responsible for protecting. Moreover, public committees were also responsible for traffic, which even before the outbreak of the revolution and in the presence of police was chaotic. Egyptians across the country were engaging in a process of replicating the ruling regime's securitisation mechanisms. Nevertheless, although the ruling regime used these mechanisms to destabilise Egyptian public spaces, Egyptians sought to secure them and protect such spaces from thugs and from the police. This clearly showed how Egyptians started feeling that the street belonged to them, and it was their responsibility to protect it.

The resilience of the protestors pushed the regime to use more violent strategies to force protestors to leave *Tahrir* Square. On 1 February, and following Mubarak's speech in which he declared that he was not seeking re-election, pro-Mubarak supporters marched from in front of the headquarters of state owned television to *Tahrir* Square and started throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at *Tahrir* protestors.

²⁹⁸ Emad, a protestor in *Tahrir* Square, had mentioned that his neighbours had asked him to go to *Tahrir* while they would protect his family.

The confrontation lasted until the early morning of 2 February. *Tahrir* Square was described by Al-Jazeera reporter Jamal el-Shayaal, as ‘a battle field’²⁹⁹. Not long after the clashes between the pro-Mubarak supporters and *Tahrir* protestors calmed down, *Tahrir* Square was getting ready for its second attack, this time by horses and camels. Members of the NDP, most notably the business tycoon Ibrahim Kamel, paid thugs to attack protestors with camels and horses to force them to leave *Tahrir* Square, which was later known as ‘*mawqe’et el-gamal*’ (‘the Battle of the Camel’). Yet regardless of these attempts to force protestors to leave *Tahrir* Square, they continued their protests, and after 18 days of occupying *Tahrir* Square, Mubarak did step down, marking the ruling regime’s loss of public spaces. This achievement of the Egyptian people was possible with the ‘neutral’ position of the Egyptian military establishment, making it clear that it would not shoot Egyptian protestors under any circumstances. This stance of the military granted the protestors in *Tahrir* Square protection that was needed to maintain their peaceful control over the square.

The Military Protects ‘the’ Public Space?

Contrary to the public-rage that accompanied the presence of the police in *Tahrir* Square, military troops were warmly welcomed in the streets of Cairo. Even before the deployment of a couple of tanks in *Tahrir* Square, protestors were chanting ‘*wahid, etneen, elgeish elmasry fein*’ (‘1, 2, where is the Egyptian Army?’). The protestors were calling upon the Egyptian military establishment, which has always been deeply respected within the Egyptian society, to protect them from the brutality of the police. Egyptians’ trust in the Egyptian military was guided by the bloodless history of the Egyptian military and its relative professionalisation. As an Egyptian street man told me “we don’t deal with the army on everyday basis... unlike the police which we clash with in our daily activities... we know the army is good, I know them from their hospitals and clubs which is very good and with reasonable prices”³⁰⁰.

²⁹⁹ Egypt Burning (Special Series): Interviews with Correspondents on the ground, Al-Jazeera English, February 24th, 2011.

³⁰⁰ Anonymous Egyptian street-man, Pers. Comm., Cairo, Egypt, July 2010.

The military's intervention in public spaces was tested before during President Sadat's era. In 1977, President Sadat asked the military to restore order following an uprising against his decision to cut government subsidies of essential commodities (Harb 2003). The military refused to interfere until Sadat cancelled the decisions. The military intervened in the streets and managed to restore order without shooting any protestor (Cook 2004). This incident strengthened the positive image of the military as a protector of Egyptian public spaces. The images of Egyptian tanks being welcomed by protestors in *Tahrir* Square confirmed this relationship of respect and appreciation. The protestors needed the military's security in the face of Mubarak's thugs and police. They were running after military tanks to show their support for them. They rushed after the soldiers trying to kiss them and take pictures with them. Soldiers responded by waving to the protestors and holding Egyptian flags to show solidarity with the protestors, in a scene similar to the return of the victorious troops from the battlefield. Nevertheless, these inspiring images were disrupted with protestors' disappointment by the limited number of tanks that were deployed to protect protestors following the withdrawal of police forces. Furthermore, protestors were furious to find out that the tanks held the plates of the presidential guards and not the Egyptian military³⁰¹. A few hours later, the tanks of the Egyptian Armed Forces were in the streets of Egypt and were welcomed by protestors who offered them flowers.

To confirm that the Armed Forces were on their side, the protestors of *Tahrir* Square wrote on the tanks '*yasqut Mubarak*' ('down with Mubarak'). The protestors wanted to confirm that the military tanks in *Tahrir* were for their protection and the protection of their public space from being invaded by the police or the pro-Mubarak thugs. The soldiers did not stop the protestors from doing so and did not remove the signs against Mubarak, the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, in a gesture that reflected the army's stance towards the protestors and *Tahrir* Square³⁰². According to Amr el-Shobaky, an Egyptian journalist, the Egyptian military was in a very delicate position, as although it made it clear that it would not shoot the protestors, at the same time, the military was not staging a military coup against President Mubarak (A. el-Shobaky

³⁰¹ Some media reports argued that Mubarak sent the presidential guards to protect the state owned TV. Then, he ordered the army to intervene.

³⁰² In spite of the fact that a curfew had been imposed all over Egypt, the military seemed hesitant to force Egyptians to adhere to it.

2011, Pers. Comm., March 23). Indeed, the Egyptian military establishment decided to address the ‘Great Egyptian people’ in televised statements, in which it showed respect, gratitude and ‘understanding of the legitimate demands of the protestors’³⁰³. Nevertheless, the military’s weak performance in protecting protestors in *Tahrir* Square from Mubarak’s regime paid thugs raised multiple question marks on the military’s genuine support for the protestors³⁰⁴.

These question marks were raised several years before the 25 January revolution. In response to the rise of the presidential succession project and mass mobilisation against it, many Egyptian intellectuals started to raise questions about the important role Egyptians were expecting the military to play in the formulation of Egypt’s future. This was represented in the articles of Hassan Nafaa and Diaa Rashwan, two prominent Egyptian intellectuals, in *Al-Masry al-Youm* in 2009. Some suggestions asked President Mubarak to step down and the military to administer a transitional period. Members of *Kefaya* asked the military to intervene to protect the protestors in the streets. George Ishaq praised the historical role of the Egyptian military calling them at least to stay neutral in any future confrontation between the regime and the protestors³⁰⁵. This hazard of who would protect the harmless protestors in the face of a gigantic police apparatus in case of confrontation was dominant in discussions on the military’s role. In an ideal situation, the state should protect public spaces, but when the state itself is involved in activities that threaten these public spaces, its intervention is very much questioned, and the need for an alternative actor, who is able to pursue the state’s role of protecting the public, becomes urgent. In Egypt, political activists were keen to make a distinction between the state and the regime. They saw the solution in the atomisation of the state- but not its dissolution- which should allow neutral, non-corrupted parts of the state to perform the role of protecting public spaces.

The overlapping between the regime, the military and the state in the Middle Eastern context makes the relationship between the military and public spaces of great

³⁰³ The Armed Forces’ Statement number (1), available online: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzHNMAz4hOk>

³⁰⁴ The Armed Forces had set up a Facebook page to engage with the Egyptian youth: <http://www.facebook.com/Egyptian.Armed.Forces>

³⁰⁵ George Ishaq, Personal Interview, Cairo, Egypt 5/6/2010.

importance. Hassan Nafaa (2009) publicly called upon the Armed Forces to perform this role. For Nafaa, the military is part of the state, but is distinct from, and even superior to, the regime, and hence it could perform a neutral role in protecting the people and the political process³⁰⁶. The important role the Egyptian military could play pushed Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of the Lebanese Hezbollah, to ask Egyptians to take to the streets under the protection of the military, to put pressure on the Egyptian government to open the Rafah crossing with Gaza in December 2008. Nasrallah's call for the Egyptian army to protect Egyptian protestors against the brutality of the regime was interpreted as an articulate call for the army to revolt. Nasrallah stressed later that he did not call for a military coup in Egypt, but rather he wanted the army to advise the president and protect the masses in the streets (Arab Times, 28 December 2008). The silence of the military over these debates and discussions fueled speculations over their role in leading the future processes. Some argued that the silence of the military was a gesture of its agreement on the succession project, and that it was just another institution of the regime that would always side with Mubarak, given the privileges they gained from the ruling regime. The military's performance following the occupation of *Tahrir* Square and which pushed Mubarak to resign, showed that the military sought to militarise Egyptian public spaces, along the same lines of Mubarak. Nevertheless, when Egyptians took to the streets in hundreds of thousands demanding Mubarak to step down, Egyptians re-defined Egyptian public spaces and created a new repertoire that would make it difficult to crush political opposition the same way Mubarak used to.

³⁰⁶ The call for the military to interfere in the political process in Egypt comes amid debates about the succession to President Hosni Mubarak, and the fear of the internal security forces' brutality against any civil opposition. Political activists hope that the army will not follow the regime's will to nominate Gamal Mubarak, the son of the president, as the head of the state, given the fact that he is not a military officer and is only supported by businessmen. Some critics think that any political role of the army can hardly be imagined given the professionalisation of the military that Hosni Mubarak embarked on during his rule.

Conclusion

Egyptian Public Spaces: For Whom the Bell Tolls?

Reflection, Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

In my thesis, I aimed at developing a new approach to understand the notion of the public space. Instead of searching for a new overarching definition of the public space, I stressed that it is more important to investigate the process through which public spaces are constituted, defined, negotiated and contested. In doing so, my research challenges dominant definitions that take the notion of the public space for granted and defines it as a space that is open and accessible to everyone. I argued that political actors are engaged in a process of defining and re-defining public spaces. I also argued that public spaces could be implicated in defining and re-defining these political actors. Accordingly, the central question of the thesis was not what the public space is, but rather how public space(s) are constituted. This shift in the question from the ‘what’ to the ‘how’ represents a break from the literature on the public space. The shift in the question from the ‘what’ into the ‘how’ necessitates a shift in the tools and methods used in order to answer the question. Accordingly, I focused on the Egyptian case study in order to answer the research’s central question of how public spaces are constituted, and how public spaces could be implicated in constituting political subjectivities.

Through focusing on political contentions within the Egyptian case study, I have shown the process, through which public spaces are contested, constituted, defined and re-defined. I started my research by focusing on three episodes of contention that represent three different junctures in Egypt’s post-colonial history. These episodes of contention are: the 1968 students and workers’ protests against the Nasser regime, the 1977 food riots against the Sadat regime, and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution against the Mubarak regime. As I discussed in the methodology section in chapter two, and as becomes evident throughout the thesis, my decision to focus on three episodes of contention, rather than only one, was informed by the research aim to investigate the ‘process’ of constituting public space. Focusing on more than one episode of

contention, although it comes at the expense of providing more detail, it gives more room for analysis and comparison, which provide a deeper understanding of the process of constituting public spaces, which is always changing and never fixed. One of the questions raised as a result of focusing on these three episodes of contention in particular was that they represent moments of resistance against the ruling regime, and hence studying them to understand the process of constituting Egyptian public spaces would limit the analysis to the role played by the forces of resistance only, while ignoring the important role of the ruling regime in defining and re-defining public space. Nevertheless, although these episodes of contention were primarily moments of resistance against the ruling regime, they have also revealed the ruling regime's attempts to constitute Egyptian public spaces. As Foucault (1990) rightly stresses 'where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (p.95). In other words, investigating the process through which forces of resistance constitute public spaces reveals the mechanisms of power that the ruling regime uses to constitute public spaces. This was manifested in the empirical chapters of the thesis, in which I analysed the three episodes of contention in terms of the actors involved, the political contentions that erupted and the spatial manifestations of these contentions.

Through studying the three episodes of contention in chapters three, four and five, I identified three dominant patterns of constituting public spaces. I referred to these patterns as: 1) the monopolisation pattern, 2) the marketisation pattern, and 3) the securitisation pattern. I structured my thesis according to these patterns of constituting public spaces, which represent an answer to the thesis central question on how public spaces are constituted.

I discussed the dominant pattern from three different aspects: 1) political contentions and the rise of the dominant pattern, 2) effects and manifestations of the dominant pattern, and 3) resistance developing from within the dominant pattern. Although the chapters followed this structure thoroughly to allow for comparisons and conclusions, the emphasis on each aspect changed from one pattern to another. The aim is to provide more details on the aspects that best capture the process of constituting public spaces and the role of political contentions in such process. For instance, in chapter three, I focused more on the manifestations of the monopolisation pattern, and the

resistance that developed against it. Studying the manifestations of the Nasser regime's hegemony over the Egyptian public sphere and the subsequent monopoly he achieved over the process of constituting public spaces gives a vivid picture of Egyptian public spaces and their formation. Equally significant was the resistance that was initiated by those who were mobilised by the ruling regime and supported its monopoly over Egyptian public spaces. In chapter four, however, I gave more emphasis to the political contentions that were taking place at the beginning of Sadat's era and which contributed to the development of the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces. I focused on the students' occupation of Cairo University, showing how the students' 'monopolisation' over the space of the university represented a challenge to the Sadat regime which decided to undermine their monopolisation through developing a new pattern of constituting public spaces, namely the marketisation pattern. In this chapter, the change from one pattern of constituting public spaces to another is evident. Finally, in chapter five, I dedicated more time, and 'space', to the resistance that developed in reaction to the securitisation pattern of constituting public spaces that was dominating the Egyptian political scene under the Mubarak regime. The protestors' decision to start their protests on the National Police Day, while chanting 'peaceful peaceful', along with the protestors' determination to protect the square 'with their lives', not only reflects the resistance against the securitisation pattern but also reveals the mechanisms used by the ruling regime to securitise and police Egyptian public spaces. Although the developments that took place after the 18 days of occupying *Tahrir* Square reflects many of the issues pertaining to the securitisation pattern, I decided to limit my thesis to the date when Mubarak resigned, which marked the end of the occupation of *Tahrir* Square, leaving this for future research.

Throughout my research, I stressed a number of issues of contentious politics and the making of public spaces. The first issue is that public spaces should not be taken for granted; they are not out there waiting for people to discover them. Public spaces are constituted as a result of political contentions among the various political actors. They are contested, changing, shifting, moving and never fixed. This is manifested in the different patterns of constituting public spaces that change as a result of a transformation in the dynamics of contention. I have shown how a change in political contentions leads to the rise of a new pattern of constituting public spaces. Political

contentions differ with the change in the nature of the political system, the political discourses of the ruling regime and the opposition, and the mobilisation of political claims, which influence the process of defining and re-defining public spaces. In other words, the reason we have different patterns of constituting public spaces, and not simply one, is that the process of constituting public spaces is inseparable from political contentions. It is important to note, however, that in my thesis I only discussed 'dominant patterns of constituting public spaces' that develop in particular contentious moments. Nevertheless, they are not the 'only patterns' that develop as a result of political contention. Different patterns of constituting public spaces develop simultaneously and coexist together at the same time. For instance, while I discussed the monopolisation pattern as the dominant pattern of constituting Egyptian public spaces under the Nasser regime, many aspects of the securitisation pattern were manifested in Egyptian public spaces. The same is true for the marketisation pattern under Sadat and the securitisation pattern under Mubarak. Moreover, and as I have argued in chapter two, the three patterns discussed in the thesis are not exhaustive; they were identified while studying political contentions in Egypt. Other patterns may be identified while studying political contentions in other case studies or in another historical juncture of Egypt's history.

The second issue that I emphasised in my research is that public spaces produce effects. In short, public spaces matter. I argued that public spaces constitute political subjectivities and shape contentions. This was manifested in my analysis of the three episodes of contention, as well as the manifestations of the three patterns of constituting public spaces. In chapter three, I discussed the Nasser regime's monopoly over Egyptian public spaces, and the spatial routines and repertoires that developed as a result of such monopoly. I have shown how Egyptian public spaces had only allowed political activities that supported the ruling regime. Although the Nasser regime did use policing and security measures to prevent anti-regime activities, it was the spatial repertoire that blocked certain activities from taking place in public spaces and kept Egyptian public spaces under the ruling regime's monopoly. This was most evident in the protests of 9 and 10 June 1967, in which Egyptians took to the streets to chant for Nasser regardless of the fact that he was defeated in the 1967 war against Israel. Although Egyptians were devastated by the defeat of 1967 and media manipulation, public spaces of authority inspired them to repeat the same practices

that were familiar to the streets, i.e. to chant for Nasser. In chapter four, I discussed the Sadat regime's attempt to de-Nasserise Egyptian public spaces through Islamising and commercialising them. Sadat's aim in altering Egyptian public spaces and changing their repertoire was to constitute consenting subjects who, once present in Egyptian public spaces, turned into consumerist subjects or religiously motivated ones. In chapter five, I have shown how *Tahrir* Square conferred protestors with agency, as a protestor in *Tahrir* Square told me 'we liberated *Tahrir* Square, but it also liberated us'.

A third issue that was present in my thesis is the issue of resistance. I have argued that resistance against the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces develops from within. As discussed earlier, the 1968 protests came in response to the monopolisation pattern of constituting public spaces, the 1977 food riots were directed towards the manifestations of the marketisation pattern of constituting public spaces, and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution was triggered by police brutality and the securitisation of Egyptian public spaces. I have argued that in these three episodes of contention, although protestors have resisted the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces, they reproduced the mechanisms of power developed by the ruling regime to control public spaces. In the student and worker protests of 1968, the protestors sought to achieve a monopoly over the spaces of the university, the factory and Al-Ahram headquarters. In the food riots of 1977, the protestors were redefining public spaces through the use of violence; they wanted to show that they were strong enough to compete with other actors in shaping public spaces, which reproduced the features of the marketisation pattern. Also, in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, protestors placed checkpoints around *Tahrir* Square to inspect whoever wanted to enter the square, a mechanism that the Mubarak regime had used to maintain the policing and the securitisation of Egyptian public space. Having said so, however, would suggest that resistance forces could never undermine the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces, seeing that they simply reproduced it. Nevertheless, in my thesis I have shown that the dominant patterns of constituting public spaces were challenged and new patterns took their position and became dominant. I want to stress that there is no contradiction between the two; on the contrary, it is this reproduction of the mechanisms of power by the forces of resistance that undermines the dominant pattern and accelerates its decline. It could be argued that the dominant pattern of

constituting public spaces is maintained as a result of relatively stable relations between the ruling regime and the forces of resistance, in which the ruling regime constitutes public spaces of authority according to the dominant pattern. When forces of resistance manage to constitute public spaces of resistance according to the same dominant pattern, the power relations between the ruling regime and forces of resistance are destabilised, marking the decline of the dominant pattern. This was manifested in the three episodes of contentions that I analysed in the thesis. In the protests of 1968, the protestors' ability to achieve a monopoly over the spaces of the university, the factory and Al-Ahram headquarters, undermined the ruling regime's monopoly over public spaces, and hence destabilised the monopolisation pattern leading to its decline. Likewise, when protestors used violence to redefine Egyptian public spaces during the food riots of 1977, in order to confirm their ability to compete with the ruling regime and other political actors in shaping public spaces according to the marketisation pattern and the 'survival of the fittest' principle, the ruling regime retreated from opening public spaces to the various political actors and abandoned the marketisation pattern altogether. Finally, in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, the protestors' success in protecting *Tahrir* Square and imposing security measures on its access, provided a new version of securitisation that was different from the ruling regime's policing. The competition between two securitisation arrangements in constituting public spaces undermined the securitisation pattern.

Last but not least, the fourth issue that my thesis raises is the link between the political discourses of the public sphere and the making of public spaces. I argued that political discourse in the public sphere had a significant impact on the shaping of public spaces and vice versa. Through focusing on the Egyptian case study, I have shown how the Egyptian ruling regimes sought to control the Egyptian public sphere in order to maintain their control over Egyptian public spaces. On the other hand, I have shown how protestors sought to re-define Egyptian public spaces in order to influence and alter political discourses of the public sphere. In chapter three, for instance, I discussed the Nasser regime's hegemony over the Egyptian public sphere and the subsequent monopoly over Egyptian public spaces. On the other hand, I illustrated how protestors occupied Al-Ahram newspapers headquarters in order to influence the political discourses of the public sphere and the ruling regime's hegemony over them. In chapter four, I highlighted the distinction that the Sadat

regime adopted between the public sphere and the public space. While the Egyptian public sphere was saturated with discussions on the prosperity that the regime's 'open door policies' (*Infitah*) would bring to all Egyptians, public spaces reflected the real face of *Infitah* policies, revealing the rising disparities between the rich and the poor. In chapter five, I particularly focused on the Internet and whether it is considered a public sphere or a public space. I emphasised that the notion of the public sphere and that of the public space are not two distinct categories that are separated from one another. I have shown how the public sphere, where political discourses are formulated significantly influence the process of constituting public spaces, as these political discourses are manifested. The dynamism between the public sphere and the public space are manifested in the virtual space of the Internet. Political discourses are formulated within the various Internet platforms, which facilitates political discussions creating a virtual public sphere. At the same time, these political discussions create a political public space that is the result of contestations among the various political discourses, which is visible. More importantly, the virtual public space created as a result of the contestations between political discourses produce effects; it leads to the construction of political subjectivities and confers agency to political actors to alter the spatial routines. This dynamism between the public sphere and public space that is embodied in the virtual space of the Internet was manifested in the dynamism between the Egyptian blogosphere and street actions.

Having discussed the main issues that my research raises, it is important to discuss the limitations of the research and which could be the subject of future research. The first limitation of the research is that it pays more attention to the ruling regime as the initiator of the 'dominant patterns of constituting public spaces'. Although it is true that ruling regimes play a significant role in developing dominant patterns of constituting public spaces, other political actors may also initiate a dominant pattern of constituting public spaces that the ruling regime becomes part of. An example of this could be found in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution and the expansion of street art and graffiti, which could be seen as representing a new pattern of constituting public spaces that might be called the 'graffitisation pattern of constituting public spaces'. While the Egyptian youth are using graffiti to re-define Egyptian public spaces, the ruling regime is resisting through trying to erase graffiti paintings. The youth keeps drawing while scandalising the regime's attempt to erase

their graffiti. The ruling regime was compelled to acknowledge the importance of graffiti and publicly declare that ‘it will protect it’.



Figure (19): Graffiti in Sheikh Riham Street, steps away from Tahrir Square, undermining the wall placed by the regime to block access to the square (Source: Suzeeinthecity Blog)³⁰⁷

Another limitation is that there appears to be a tension between the role of political contention in constituting public spaces, and on the other hand the role of public spaces in constituting political subjectivities and shaping contention. I have stressed that the two processes should be seen as complementary rather than being mutually exclusive. I sought to balance between the two processes by giving more attention to the process through which political contentions constitute public spaces in my analysis of the episodes of contention, while discussing the role of public spaces in constituting political subjectivities in analysing the effects and manifestations of the dominant pattern of constituting public spaces.

There is another limitation of my research in which I focused on the process of constituting public spaces within the boundaries of the nation state. I have also

³⁰⁷ The Graffiti reflects the role of art in re-defining public spaces. This graffiti not only challenges the spatial routines of the space of the street of Sheikh Riham in downtown Cairo, but also challenges the physical setting of the space. This graffiti was part of an initiative called mafeesh gidran (No Walls). On the role of graffiti in the Egyptian revolution see Suzeeinthecity blog post: <http://www.arabstands.com/2012/04/the-surprising-creative-talents-of-egypts-underground-artists-beautifying-the-revolutions-mess/> (Last accessed 10/08/2011).

focused on political discourses of the public sphere that develop on the national level. It would be interesting to see future research on the role of the 'transnational public sphere' on the process of constituting public spaces on both the national and international level. The Egyptian case study offers some interesting insights in this regard. During the Nasser era the Egyptian public sphere had transnational implications leading to the constitution of an Arab public sphere that had affected the process of constituting public spaces in all Arab countries. Even during the Sadat era, the impact of global discourses of marketisation had its impact on Egyptian public spaces. Also, under the Mubarak regime, the role of the Internet and the discourses of globalisation had significant influences in the shaping of Egyptian public spaces.

Moreover, the focus on the episodes of contention came at the expense of thoroughly analysing the development of political actors that came as a result of the dynamics between political contentions and the making of public spaces. In my research, I gave little attention to influential actors like the Muslim Brothers and the Salafis, who play a significant role in shaping public spaces in Egypt and the Arab world. I have briefly mentioned the Muslim Brothers in the struggle over public spaces with the Nasser regime. I have discussed them in more detail under the Sadat regime, referring to the Islamisation of Egyptian public spaces. Under the Mubarak regime, Islamists integrated with other political forces to have greater influence in re-defining public spaces.

Finally, my research gave little attention to gender relations and the making of public spaces, a significant topic that requires further investigation and raises a number of questions. It would be interesting to see further research on political contentions over gender and their spatial manifestations. There are already some studies on gender and public spaces and on political contentions over gender, yet it would be interesting to see how gender relations define and re-define public spaces and not only how public spaces define gender relations.

As discussed earlier, my research opens the door for further research in a number of areas. While discussing the limitations of my research, I highlighted some of the areas for future research, including the role of art in constituting public spaces, the role of non-state actors in initiating dominant patterns of constituting public spaces, further

analysis of the tension between the contentious politics and the making of public spaces, the role of transnational public sphere on the making of public spaces, the changes in the nature of political actors as a result of the dynamics between political contentions and the making of public spaces and finally, the role of gender relations in defining and re-defining public spaces. Moreover, my research encourages the study of public spaces in different cases studies and the investigation of the different patterns of constituting public spaces. This is significant because public spaces were usually studied in association with the democratisation process. My research challenges this bond between public spaces and democracy, which expands the applicability of the notion of the public space to wider case studies.

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